



UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA
Facultat d'Economia

***Business models, small firms, and performance in
knowledge-intensive based services. A study in the
private health sector.***

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Als meus pares, Enrique i Consuelo,
Als meus germans, Enrique, Miguel i Fernando,
Als meus nebots, Lucía, Daniel, Laia i Diego,
I a la resta de la família,
Gràcies per la vostra paciència.

Ain't no need to watch where I'm goin'; just need to know where I've been.

Tow Mater (*Cars*).

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Escribo estas líneas con la única pretensión de reflexionar y no olvidar todas las sensaciones vívidas a lo largo de estos 4 años de durísimo trabajo. Quiero contar mi verdad para que tú, doctorando que acudes a esta tesis, seas consciente de mi experiencia. Estoy seguro que, si alguien me hubiera relatado la suya, habría sido capaz de gestionar mejor mis emociones.

La mayoría del tiempo me he visto como estúpido, o incapaz de poder terminar este trabajo. Desesperanza, soledad, ansiedad y la sensación de sentirme perdido en este mundo han sido unos compañeros de viaje muy presentes.

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INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION¹.

Background and research justification.

Entrepreneurship and society.

According to Schumpeter's work (1942), entrepreneurship provides innovativeness, and new organizational production and merchandising patterns to society. It allows economies to create and develop wealth (GEM, 2018; Shantz et al., 2018; Naminse et al., 2019). Consequently, promoting this phenomenon is not only relevant for entrepreneurs, but also for economic, geographic, and social environments (Steyaert and Katz, 2006). It is also relevant to government and political agendas. Policymakers at local, regional, and national levels design, formulate, and implement policies towards reinforcing entrepreneurship to develop and improve society².

However, implementing policies to encourage and support entrepreneurship is no guarantee of success. This requires investigation, analysis, and discussion of the main issues concerning entrepreneurs (Vivas-López et al., 2016). Resource-based theory highlights scarce resources as a source of competitive advantage, such as size and experience. Industrial organization theory states that company performance derives from the relationship between industry structure and firm behavior. Location is also a relevant issue to be considered: Gwebu et al. (2019)

¹ This research has been partially funded by the Research Project UV-INV-AE19-1206484 of the University of Valencia (Spain).

² As an example, scientific journals such as *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* are directly connected to the study of the entrepreneurship phenomenon in local and regional contexts.

have recently shown that enterprises in scientific parks obtain better performance results than those located outside of them.

In summary, the differences perceived in entrepreneurship performance in the context of companies is a topic requiring further research (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Boons et al., 2013). Shedding light on the competitive heterogeneity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in knowledge-intensive-based services (KIBS) is of specific interest to researchers for three main reasons: strategic, socio-economic, and opportunistic.

In terms of strategy, all entrepreneurs face initial decisions relating to their business plans, which are implemented by selecting the appropriate relationships with customers and suppliers, information mechanisms, employees' organization alliances, and value creation. Most of these questions can be answered by deciding on the business model (BM).

At the socio-economical level, this research is appealing because business failures of new companies are still high. The consequences of this can be dramatic both social and economic levels. According to Blasco and Carrizosa (2007), SMEs register lower success rates (51%) compared with larger companies (65%). This difference is more evident for SMEs in the service sector, revealing an average life of seven fewer years of activity than larger companies.

Finally, investigation of SMEs in KIBS warrants further research to fill in gaps in the literature. There is a growing trend to study entrepreneurship in this sector (Lopez and Ramos, 2013). Lugo and Espina (2014) have revealed that entrepreneurs' choice of activity is based on institutional, economic, and social issues. Moreover, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development³, software development, sustainable energies, and health service improvement, are the most successful activities for SMEs.

³ Source: <http://www.oecd.org>. Employment Outlook 2020 Facing the jobs crisis. Accessed: 10 June 2020.

To sum up, we can affirm that KIBS are an opportunity for researchers to study organizational trends, the environment, and required skills, and the connection between them and their performance. Although there are some examples (e.g.: Ripoll-Soler and De Miguel-Molina, 2014; Hyder et al., 2019), many of these activities remain unexplored. In this sense, the present dissertation tries to shed some light on them. More specifically, I analyze private health services.

An example of entrepreneurship in Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS): SMEs operating in private health services (PHS). Exclusive items and present situation.

The distinction between manufacturers and service companies is clear (Segarra-Oña et al., 2014): goods production, mainly tangible outputs, versus service production, mostly intangible outputs, respectively (Windrum and Tomlinson, 1999). However, differences between health service companies and other service companies have not yet been clarified. There is a plethora of heterogeneous activities in this tertiary sector (Romero-Amado, 2010). Some researchers recommend focusing on a specific business service rather than analyzing the sector as a whole.

One of the first attempts to characterize this tertiary sector came from Miles et al. (1995). These authors concentrated their research on KIBS. It can be defined as *“those activities based on knowledge and experience from professionals related to a specific technical field or function”* (Windrum and Tomlinson, 1999: 392). KIBS involves two types of professions: Firstly, professions whose activities are related to engineering and technological innovation, called technology-knowledge-intensive business (T-KIBS). Secondly, professions that are users of such technologies, including advertising, real estate agents, and lawyers, called professional knowledge-intensive business services (P-KIBS). Although many authors have studied the first group, the second remains virtually unexplored (Freel, 2006; Davis and McMaster, 2015). Therefore, this dissertation contributes to the literature by exploring P-KIBS, specifically private health services (PHS). According to Chung and Tseng (2019), PHS are the most knowledge-intensive

activities within P-KIBS, obtaining higher values compared to education, science, and financial services.

PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICES' UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS.

PHS are shaped by all clinics aiming to improve the health of societies. Depending on the country or regional policies, these services are public, private, or mixed. In Spain, PHS include dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy, among others. All these services have some features in common, such as the small size of clinics (Guay et al., 2012), vocational orientation, and high percentage of highly-qualified employees (Chung and Tseng, 2019). Moreover, these professions have distinctive features that make them unique compared with other services: on the one hand, restrictive legal requirement; and, on the other hand, a considerable investment in terms of training and specific assets.

- Restrictive legal requirements.

In Spain, the two legal requirements of professionals are written in Art. 3 of Law 2/1974, of February 13th, about Professional Associations (PAs)⁴.

- The first requirement is the possession of an academic degree relating to the profession. People cannot work without having an established academic degree.
- The second requirement is a PA affiliation. Even having an academic degree, professionals cannot carry out functions related to their profession if they are not registered with a relevant PA.

If both requirements are not fulfilled, a fraud will occur, which will be punished by law in the Spanish courts.

⁴ The article literally states:

Third article.

One. Whoever holds the required degree and meets the statutory conditions will have the right to be admitted to the corresponding Professional Association.

Two. Membership to the Professional Association whose territorial scope is intended for the exercise of the profession is an indispensable requirement.

- High investment in training and specific assets.

PHS require many specialized and expensive assets. The equipment and tools are very sophisticated, and may be expensive and not easily to acquire. For example, some business plans have specified that €16,200 is required to set up a physiotherapy clinic (Mesones-Revuelta, 2016), and up to €85,000 for a dentistry clinic (Andreu, 2014). Consequently, running such services based on extensive prior training and considerable investment in specific assets due to PHS competitiveness requires possession of intangible resources that are hard to transfer, such as reputation and knowledge (Arcas et al., 2016).

To sum up, all the legal requirements, prior training, and specific assets create a strong entry barrier for new competitors, while at the same time providing a stable, attractive, and profitable environment for entrepreneurs to develop these services. However, various socio-economic changes have led to a more complex and turbulent situation, creating uncertainty in the future of some PHS.

PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICES PRESENT SITUATION.

It can be affirmed that PHS are undergoing a considerable transformation, given the social and economic changes that have recently appeared. Some of these are from the offer side and others from the demand side.

The offer side shows an increasing trend of available qualified professionals ready to work, with better access to technologies. For example, the University Employability and Employment Observatory⁵ shows that PHS degrees compared to other academic degrees are mainly offered by private universities. Concretely, 23% of optics and optometry degrees are offered by private universities, with 34% of physiotherapy degrees and 36% in the case of dentistry. These numbers are higher than for other fields such as English philology (5,5%) and biology (10%)⁶. Moreover, the number of active professionals associated with PHS has

⁵Source: Observatorio de Empleabilidad y Empleo Universitarios (<https://www.consumer.es>).

⁶There are some exceptions, such as business management degrees, with around 33% being offered by private universities.

grown exponentially throughout the last few years, considering as a threat by experienced professionals (Llodrà-Calvo, 2010).

The demand side illustrates changes in customer trends, indicating greater need for PHS (Trathen and Gallaguer, 2009). *Euromonitor* report (2015) informed an increase of 3% for dentistry services. Regarding optometry, Libro Blanco de la Visión (2013) warns about screen risks for eyes, leading to greater demand for eye tests. Similarly, the Castilla-La Mancha PA cautions about incorrect postures of using mobile devices and computers,⁷ translating into more people seeking consultation about such issues.

To sum up, the increasing number of professionals, combined with growing demand for PHS, has created a more competitive environment, full of challenges and opportunities. Many entrepreneurs have become aware of these developments, and, consequently, have created new ways of working, configurations, and placements, have adopted alternative strategies, and have pursued alternative objectives. On the one hand, some professionals have innovated the service they offer, focusing on market niches. On the other hand, some have applied different organizational innovations, looking for synergies and improving resource efficiency, in other words, transformation of BMs.

The definition of the BM concept is quite blurred. According to Chesbrough (2010), it is a representation of entrepreneurial decisions, such as:

- How to create value.
- How to identify a market niche and sales mechanisms.
- How to define a value chain and asset organization.
- How to estimate the cost structure and potential profits.
- How to describe the relationships between customers and suppliers.
- How to formulate a competitive company strategy to obtain competitive advantage.

⁷Source: Ilustre Colegio Profesional de Fisioterapeutas de Castilla La Mancha (<http://www.coficam.org>. Accessed: 31 January 2020).

In summary, PHS entrepreneurs must make decisions based on their business plans. All such decisions will affect the scope, relationships with customers, alliances with suppliers, stakeholders, key resources, services offered, structure, marketing, and ultimately, the perceived performance (Magretta, 2002).

THE TRADITIONAL INDEPENDENT BUSINESS MODEL.

PHS have traditionally been developed by professional entrepreneurs operating in small clinics who assume all roles related to entrepreneurial action. More concretely:

- They assume the entire entrepreneurial risk. Beyond financial risk, they also bear risks associated with reputation, brand, and image.
- They add innovations: These entrepreneurs incorporate new services in their market, new marketing tools, and new advertising mechanisms (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).
- They have full autonomy: When these entrepreneurs decide to run their own business, they have acquired all the required skills and experience needed to develop the service they provide.

One of the main problems of independent clinics is that entrepreneurs must develop numerous functions. However, doing all the tasks presents challenges since there may be incompatibilities or conflicts of interest. Many authors (e.g., Miles et al., 1995; Gerber, 1997) have studied these issues. The following table summarizes the leading roles and functions applied to PHS:

Table 0.1: Main roles assumed by PHS independent entrepreneurs.

Role	Main Roles	Incompatibilities
TECHNICIAN	<p>Professionals develop all technical roles related to the profession. As an example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dentists: mouth cleanings, dental implants, root canals, etc. - Physiotherapists: electrotherapy, kinesiotherapy, massages, punctures, etc. - Optometry: sight measurement, low vision, calibration, etc. 	<p>All these procedures require time to execute and are the primary source of income for the clinic. To be able to develop them in the best way, the technician wants to have the best materials and specific assets.</p>

ACCOUNTANT	<p>The professional must comply with obligations concerning the operation of the clinic, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity license. - Payrolls. - Advertising. - Accounting. - Provisioning. - HH.RR. - Etc. 	<p>These tasks are conflict with the technical roles of having certain materials and top-quality equipment or hiring qualified personnel. From an accountant perspective, these decisions may destabilize the clinic's accounts.</p> <p>Additionally, these tasks usually involve a high component of frustration for professionals in the sector, as they require a certain amount of time that does not add value to the company.</p>
CREATIVE	<p>Professional wants to update his/her knowledge and to be at the forefront in some key procedures. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating of knowledge (courses, congresses, additional training, etc.) - Develop new solutions to emerging problems. 	<p>Training and skills development requires a significant amount of time (conflicting with technician role) as well as economic resources caused by tuition or travel expenses (in conflict with the accountant, who observes an increase in costs and a reduction in incomes).</p>

Source: Own elaboration based on Gerber, 1997.

To avoid such situations, some researchers propose that tasks should be delegated if they require in-depth and detailed knowledge that is not easily transferable. Although problems of coordination may arise among professionals, other much higher costs derived from inefficiencies would be erased (Peris-Ortiz et al., 2012). Consequently, many entrepreneurs are willing to lose part of the control of their business and the production process to improve financial results (Dorobantu et al., 2017). This is one of the main reasons that some entrepreneurs develop alliances and networks.

ASSOCIATED BUSINESS MODELS IN PHS.

Compared to a small independent clinic led by a qualified and multitasking entrepreneur, new BMs adopt a more evident division of roles, networking among clinics, and task specialization. Under these models, the entrepreneur delegates to other members or networks of clinics, under some type of formal alliance or contract. Thus:

- **There is a division of risk:** Although the entrepreneur is the one who assumes a large part of the risk by contributing the entrepreneurial initiative, economic resources, and local knowledge, the network which he joins accepts part of the risk by providing a brand image, a

training period, and establishing synergies with other members and professionals.

- **The innovations are mainly the network's responsibility:** The entrepreneur innovates by setting up their clinic in which they believe that there is an unmet demand. However, the network they join brings more concrete innovations in the forms of new advertising ways, better access to economies of scale, exclusive technologies, and synergies from shared knowledge with other members.
- **Usually, there is no total autonomy to carry out the service tasks:** The entrepreneur rarely has the technical knowledge and skills to carry out all the work required. For this reason, they delegate some tasks to both qualified hired professionals and the network they have joined.

Therefore, some professionals and entrepreneurs who have seen a business opportunity in PHS establish these alliances to ease entry barriers.

Implications of associated business models in PHS.

The emergence of new BMs in PHS supposes a critical organizational innovation in terms of the division of roles and tasks, and the competitive strategy; training requirements of the professionals (specialization); and even the functions exercised by the PAs. More specifically, we believe that the main changes detected can be grouped into three types: those relating to (1) the environment of the activity, (2) the level of knowledge required, and (3) labor relations.

CHANGES IN THE SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENT.

Traditionally, PHS were highly influenced by the institutional agents who exercised their power through the established legal development, restrictions, and specific conditions of social order (Arruñada, 1999). These functions are mainly regulated by PAs, limiting the strategic alternatives for entrepreneurs to ensure quality standards.

With the entry of associated business models (ABMs), other competing mechanisms unavailable until now have been adopted. These kinds of businesses try to develop and apply the most advanced technical and organizational innovations, assuming creative roles. Such actions have affected small independent entrepreneurs, who have been forced to reorient their strategies to become more efficient, by emphasizing their focus and marketing.

Furthermore, these changes have also affected the PAs' functions. The recent irruption of the ABM has raised doubts about the efficiency and viability of these PAs. Therefore, these organizations are being forced to reorient their activities, including the organization and safeguarding of their professions.

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT.

PHS professionals have traditionally relied on continuous professional development for their competitive advantage. For many years, the best professional has been considered the person who best knew the different techniques and specific skills for their profession. Therefore, it could be said that technical roles predominate.

With the influx of various ABMs, managerial and creative tasks have acquired greater prominence. The application of unpublished knowledge has added other value. Examples include knowledge related to the promotion of services, targeting customers, loyalty strategies, and advertising campaigns.

CHANGES IN LABOR RELATIONS.

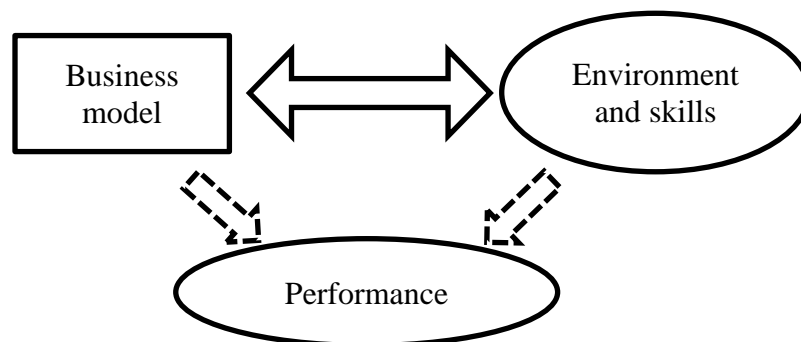
This section explains how the professionals leading the PHS companies do training related to their activities. The roles of technician, manager, and creator overlap. With the appearance of the networks of associated clinics, an increase in hiring professionals has been observed, in combination with a higher volume of commercial agreements between the clinic networks and self-employed professionals.

This hiring trend also implies a change in the interests pursued by the hired professionals. For traditional independent professionals, remuneration was not based on wages. Social recognition, self-employment or vocation development are interesting rewards for them. However, qualified personnel are hired as employees in ABMs with the primary motivation being financial (Carraher, 2011).

In summary, to the question of what are the antecedents and justification of this thesis? We dare propose the following: entrepreneurs, small businesses, and PHS companies each require specific investigation. The differentiating elements (size, legislation, and training skills needed) and the environmental changes support this. Also, this thesis addresses questions required to be answered in the new competitive environment. For this purpose, the starting point is distinguishing between BMs (independent and associated) present in PHS, and evaluating the environment, and capabilities, and perceived performance.

Given that we assume that the BM influences performance, the perception of the institutional environment and the capabilities possessed are associated with the performance results of the activity, and that both determinants (BM and institutional environment capabilities) influence each other, we propose the following research schema:

Figure 0.1: Research scheme.



Source: Own elaboration.

Objectives and research questions.

From the prior schema, we propose the following main objective of this doctoral thesis:

To study the business model effect on small private health service companies' activity and analyze institutions' and intellectual capital's role in their performance.

This objective is divided into three specific aims:

1) To analyze the perceived performance in the exercise of the profession.

These activities have a strong vocational component. The economic performance is less important than other components such as social recognition and developing the work that the professionals are trained in. With the arrival of ABMs, economic efficiency has gained greater prominence, calling into question the viability of traditional independent BMs more oriented to satisfying the vocational component. Therefore, this first specific objective is proposed to confirm whether there are relevant differences in the company's performance between the different BMs analyzed.

2) To determine the role played by the main institutional referents.

This objective was proposed to study the perception of environmental agents. More specifically, we attempt to confirm if the ABMs are perceived as reference institutions in PHS, or, on the contrary, if it is the PAs who continue to enjoy the status as the central regulatory institution.

To achieve this objective, the study has been designed from institutional theory. The isomorphic effects of the institutions (coercive, normative, and mimetic) and their origin (legal legitimation for PAs; and market legitimation for companies leading the activity) have been considered.

3) To investigate the association between intellectual capital and activity performance.

In the traditional independent BMs, all investment in knowledge is aimed at strengthening the technical dimension. However, with the entry of ABMs, a greater variety of knowledge incorporated from managerial, organizational, and relational skills improves these activities' efficiency.

Therefore, this objective was adopted to evaluate the relationship between professionals' investment in the three main dimensions of intellectual capital, the BM implemented, and the performance results obtained. With this, it is intended to observe the level of intangibles that these companies have based on specific knowledge, related training, skills and experience (human capital); specific machinery and coordination mechanisms (structural capital); and customer support, reputation, and relationships with the environment (relational capital).

In short, in light of the changes experienced by the companies that are the object of this Doctoral Thesis, we believe that beyond the independent-associated dichotomy, the BM captures the evolution in the entrepreneurial management of these companies. Furthermore, for this study, we must also take into account, on the one hand, the different institutions overseeing these professions given the special regulation they exercise, and, on the other hand, the different resources that these companies possess, referred to as intellectual capital (the technical knowledge related to the profession and the knowledge related to the management and improvement of the productive process). All these issues are a good starting point for predicting the future performance of PHS.

Thesis structure.

The first chapter analyzes the main parts that will be examined in the investigation. It begins with a literature review on the phenomenon and main characteristics of entrepreneurship. The three main ABMs that operate in this type of activity (franchising chains, cooperatives, and purchasing centers) are also analyzed. Next, given their importance, PAs, and the role they play is studied. The last section of the chapter assesses the triangular relationship between entrepreneurs, associated networks, and PAs.

The second chapter establishes the two theoretical approaches used to study the primary institutional references, intangible resources, and perceived performance. First, institutional theory was selected. This approach focuses on the analysis of the business environment, which is relevant for analyzing the influence of both PAs and associated clinic networks. Second, intellectual capital theory was used to analyze the intangible resources these companies possess. It is justified that they are very knowledge-intensive activities, one of the key aspects of obtaining competitive advantage (Suciu et al., 2019).

The third chapter includes the main methodological aspects carried out in this research. The first section characterizes the situation of the three professions analyzed (dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy), with particular emphasis on the evolution since their creation, current regulations, and the situation of their professionals. Next, we introduce the two methodologies implemented. Given that these activities are a relatively new phenomenon and that the number of companies analyzed is very small (9 or fewer employees), it was decided to adopt an exploratory mixed-methods approach. We start from a qualitative approach that allows in-depth investigation of the perceptions by the professionals, key aspects that are intended to be studied, such as the perception of the actions that PAs carry out, the knowledge that these companies possess, and how this knowledge is acquired and managed. Once the current situation of professionals in these activities is understood, a quantitative study is developed. This is based on previous qualitative research, combined with a questionnaire answered by a

sample of 78 companies. The respondents are asked about aspects relating to intellectual capital, the institutions' role, and perceived competitiveness.

The fourth chapter details the main results obtained from the two methodologies implemented. The first section consists of the most relevant descriptive data, such as the role played, location, and experience of the professionals. Next, the qualitative research is presented: the main perceptions and opinions based on the previously-mentioned theoretical approaches are exposed. Following this, the results obtained from the quantitative study are shown. The statistical analysis considers the different analysis levels proposed, the BMs, the activities, and the respondents' roles. Furthermore, given the data's non-parametric nature, it was decided to implement a qualitative comparative analysis (*Qualitative Comparative Analysis - QCA*). Finally, the conclusions drawn from both studies are discussed, from the QCA mentioned above, complementary non-parametric techniques, our own qualitative research, and the literature review.

The last chapter presents the conclusions, illustrating the main findings and the interpretation of the results achieved in the qualitative and quantitative analyses. Lastly, the limitations of the study are cited and suggestions for future research are provided.

Contributions.

The results of this work provide contributions at academic, professional, and political levels:

At the **academic level**, this thesis contributes to literature related to SME, entrepreneurship, and BMs. This point is of particular significance, given the confusion existing in the current research about BMs (Foss and Saebi, 2018) and their performance (Nielsen et al., 2018). To obtain a full view of the phenomenon, companies' owners and employees' perceptions were studied to provide a more global perspective of their situation.

Furthermore, the particular characteristics of PHS companies make it possible to build bridges between the two theoretical approaches used. On the one hand, the importance of knowledge in these activities allows a contribution to the theories of knowledge management and intellectual capital from the institutional framework (e.g., How do environmental agents affect the knowledge that companies possess?). On the other hand, given the particular regulation of these activities and the impact of new organizations, this thesis contributes to studying the effects of new knowledge management methods on the different institutions in the environment (How do new business models and their innovations affect the actions of PAs and their members?).

At the **political level**, this work provides institutional agents (PAs, legislators, client associations, suppliers etc.) with a complete view of PHS organizational problems. Making the correct decisions is crucial for the future of their professions. In addition, although only PHS are analyzed in this work, there are professionals with other similar services that similarly have entry barriers based on knowledge and legal development. Examples of these are economists, administrative managers, real estate agents, lawyers, and solicitors⁸.

⁸ A list of the professions with compulsory membership can be found at: <http://eugo.es/portalEugo/verProfesionesReguladas.htm>.

Finally, this thesis contains recommendations for PHS professionals. Although it is perceived that these activities are expanding, it is important to implement those actions that allow survival when external factors become less favorable. Therefore, this work highlights several critical aspects that professionals should consider to improve their companies' efficiency and future prospects. These aspects can be classified into two categories as detailed below:

On the one hand, the selection of BM implies accepting a series of tactical decisions and the rejection of others, according to the model implemented (Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart, 2010). Therefore, this thesis will determine each model's major decisions and their importance in creating value.

On the other hand, we analyze the role developed by environmental associations. This research highlights the importance of collaborative economies among PHS entrepreneurs. Traditional associationism shows the inevitable obsolescence of the traditional independent BM. For this reason, the optimization of professional skills, the creation of synergies, and coordination mechanisms can lead to an improvement in the efficiency of their activities.

**CHAPTER 1: ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUSINESS MODELS,
AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.**

1. ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUSINESS MODELS, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.

The introduction of this dissertation talked about Knowledge-Intensive Based Services (KIBS). This thesis will study dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy. Professionals related to such activities have to fill some requirements. On the one hand, the achievement of legal requirements related to Professional Association membership and the possession of a Bachelor's Degree related to the activity is mandatory. On the other hand, these activities demand a considerable investment in knowledge and specific assets that professionals must acquire.

In this situation, governments are unable to organize such activities efficiently. To solve this problem, they delegate some legitimacy to professional associations (PA). These agents emerged to regulate their activities, ensuring certain quality levels from all practitioners, creating entry barriers, and informing about intrusiveness in their sectors (Arruñada, 1992).

PA have promoted the traditional-independent companies, led by a professional who is also the owner. These companies are characterized by little bargaining power, high costs, high-quality service, community investment, increased customer expectations, limited scale economies, and a small investment in infrastructures (size) (Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart, 2010:203).

However, some companies have recently surpassed all these legal and knowledge pressures, creating networks of companies. So, they are changing some KIBS. Their actions consist of offering more affordable services for customers, with

financial tools, marketing policies, advertising campaigns, and many more. In other words, these new companies have taken advantage of the PA conservative position, creating business models based on a search for efficiency and more oriented to economic results. In this dissertation, I analyze cooperatives, franchising chains, and bargaining centers.

Therefore, this chapter aims to introduce the parties involved in this dissertation, their main strategic interrelations among them, and its effect on the firm's performance. The first section develops the main features of entrepreneurial behavior. The second one talks about different business models, focusing on independent ones (IBM) and the most relevant business models (ABM). The third section introduces professional associations as a critical regulatory agent. Finally, we develop a relation among entrepreneurs, associated companies, and professional associations. The chapter concludes with the main ideas extracted from the review made.

The introduction of these three parties will allow a better understanding of the use of theoretical approaches used in the present dissertation. First, the influence of PA and the network of companies are powerful sources of isomorphism. These organizations can establish accepted behaviors and punish fines or reputation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Díez-De-Castro et al. (2015). Therefore, they will be related to institutional influences. Second, prior training and capabilities allocated to the clinics are essential assets in these activities (Kianto et al, 2010, Carmona-Lavado et al., 2013). Professional skills related to such activities are very scarce in our society. Practitioners must invest a lot of time to achieve them. Besides, machinery is another cornerstone of these activities. Specific assets are costly to acquire. Finally, loyalty and reputation are also other essential assets. It is a fact that society is readier to spend more money (less price-sensitive) in health activities to obtain the best service. Consequently, all these dimensions will be closely associated with understanding the intellectual capital theory.

1.1 Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is one critical success factor for the economic development of a society. Given this, researchers are increasing their interest in this topic (Rawhouser et al., 2019). As an example, scientific journals like *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Small Business Economics*, or *Journal of Retailing* illustrate the importance of this topic.

1.1.1 Definition and research trends.

Traditionally, the entrepreneurship concept has been described by a list of characteristics, behaviors, and actions. For example, Schumpeter published one of the first definitions. According to his work (1942:132): “...*entrepreneurship function is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products, by reorganizing an industry and so on.*” Following Schumpeter’s work, entrepreneurship research has been improved, especially from the eighties onwards.

In the field of entrepreneurship, it exists two important trends to define this concept (Gartner, 1990). The first group focuses on characteristics, while the second one focuses on the outcomes (Sharma and Chrisman, 1999). From the first approach, Venkataraman defines the field of entrepreneurship “*as the scholarly examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited*” (1997:120). Besides, as Shane and Venkataraman pointed out, “*This definition involves also sources of opportunities; the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate, and exploit them*” (2000:218).

In the second approach, Gartner (1988) considers that entrepreneurship is not a person or group of people. For him, the concept is a process. That means entrepreneurial behavior embraces individuals, groups of people, and organizations (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). According to Gartner, the entrepreneurial activity must clarify some issues such as entrepreneur tasks, information, scheduling, roles assumption, decision-making process, and organization. In other words, he rejects the classification of the entrepreneurship concept as a group of skills or behaviors.

In line with these definitions, the most important subject in the field of entrepreneurship is the entrepreneur. “*Who is an entrepreneur? And who is not?*” are two of the most common question in this field. Since de Gartner’s article was published, researchers also have to ask, “*What an entrepreneur does?*” (1988). Is it possible to accept this conclusion because, as Lazear says, “*managers who reinvent their company can also be considered entrepreneurs*” (2005: 651). In the same vein, Williams (1999) considers multiple entrepreneurial types, from self-employed to corporate entrepreneurs and, their motivation can be “*achieved through purchase or inheritance of an independent business or purchase of a franchise*” (Kaufmann, 1999:349). To sum up, entrepreneurs also involve employees and managers, not only business owners⁹.

Taking into account previous research, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) suggest five dimensions to measure the entrepreneurial orientation (EO). According to these authors, these dimensions are:

- **Autonomy:** this means to the “*independent action of an individual or a team in bringing forth an idea or a vision and carrying it through to completion*” (1996:140). According to these authors, in this dimension, EO can be supported by owners or by managers as well.
- **Innovativeness:** this concept “*reflects a firm's tendency to engage in and support new ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new products, services, or technological processes*” (1996:142).

⁹ Some researches establish differences between them. Employees and managers with entrepreneurial orientation are called “*intrapreneurs*”.

- **Risk-taking:** “firms with an entrepreneurial orientation are often typified by risk-taking behaviors, such as incurring heavy debt or making large resource commitments, in the interest of obtaining high returns by seizing opportunities in the marketplace” (1996:144).
- **Pro-activeness:** “taking the initiative by anticipating and pursuing new opportunities and by participating in emerging markets also has become associated with entrepreneurship (1996:146)”. In the same vein, Venkataraman suggests this dimension consist on “seeking new opportunities which may or may not be related to the present line of operations, introduction of new products and brands ahead of competition, strategically eliminating operations which are in the mature or declining stages of life cycle (1989:949)”. As these authors say, this concept is always present in EO, and the entrepreneurs are always looking for market opportunities.
- **Competitive aggressiveness:** refers to a “firm's propensity to directly and intensely challenge its competitors to achieve entry or improve position, that is, to outperform industry rivals in the marketplace (1996:148)”

Nevertheless, these concepts may vary given a context in its intensity independently in the EO (Lumping and Dess, 1996). Later research has simplified the five dimensions into three (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Dada and Watson, 2012). These are proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovativeness.

Nevertheless, how entrepreneurs are affected by these dimensions? Once the entrepreneurs run their company, they apply at some extent all of them, being able to develop and implement a certain number of tasks and roles such as (Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Singh et al., 1986; Shepherd et al., 2000):

- **Learn new tasks:** An entrepreneur with an idea will have to learn a significant amount of new tasks, related to management, advertising, accounting, or innovation.
- **Know the characteristics of new products and markets:** entrepreneurs must know all processes related to their products or services to offer the most appropriated to their customers, solve problems, and inefficiencies. Besides, they have to know unique market characteristics.
- **Manage conflicts regarding new organizational roles:** entrepreneurs have to perform at least three different profiles (technician, accounting, and creative), and those conflict with them all the time. Usually, entrepreneurs start their activity with one dominant profile (Gerber, 1997).

- **Provide stability to stakeholders:** if the entrepreneur has looked for partners and stakeholders, he or she has some responsibilities in front of them. As a group of pressure, this collective can affect the entrepreneur's behavior, advising, counseling, and others. The entrepreneurs aim to inform them of the situation of the company or business.
- **Provide stability with the company itself:** not only stakeholders are a group of pressure, but unions, employees, suppliers, and other agents affect business behavior.

If entrepreneurs do not appropriately develop all these roles, the rates of survival of their clinics will decrease. For example, authors as Shepherd et al. (2000) argue that the mortality risk depends on some factors related to the *novelty to the market* (customer knowledge is incomplete to do the company successfully), the *novelty in production* (relative to knowledge and experience necessary to compete) and the lack of *managerial capabilities* (related to competencies such as management, quality assurance or relations with stakeholders). To overcome these liabilities, these authors have detected some strategies, such as to inform potential customers and seek marketing agreements with existing firms. Another type of response lies in reducing product ignorance (e.g., adopting licensing or product design) and management ignorance (e.g., co-operatives or franchising chains).

Consequently, Lazear (2005) found that people who have developed more different jobs, and invested in education are more likely to be entrepreneurs. Completing these studies, Estay et al., (2013) consider including the motivation (*accomplishment*) is also a vital issue in the EO.

Given the growing interest in entrepreneurship, many approaches are studying this phenomenon, such as public administration and policies, education, or international business (Covin et al., 2019). Deepen on this topic, the paper published by Kuckertz and Prochotta (2018) asks more than two hundred entrepreneurial researchers about the most promising topics. Their findings show (1) entrepreneurial processes, (2) entrepreneurial behavior, (3) social entrepreneurship, (4) psychology, and (5) innovation as the most interesting fields.

1.1.2 Entrepreneurship in KIBS.

The entrepreneurial process includes growth, human resource management, value and venture creation, business models, and cooperation and networks (Kuckertz and Prochotta, 2018:2). In this sense, this thesis makes an exciting approach related to this field for many reasons:

- Human resource policies are a crucial issue. I study KIBS. Therefore, employees and entrepreneurs with high skills in terms of training and education develop these activities.
- The venture, alliances, and networks are quite unorganized in small firms like those under study here. Besides, the lack of business management training from most professionals creates weaknesses for most companies. As an example, Huggins and Weir (2012) found that the innovation in SME operating in KIBS is especially hard, given the difficulties to manage the intellectual capital they have.
- However, the ABM may provide some delegation of tasks that professional entrepreneurs are not prepared. These alliances may create some strengths: Braga et al., (2017) showed that the cooperation may be a source of non-technological innovation in KIBS firms

1.2 The business models.

Although there are many strategies entrepreneurs may adopt, what seems clear is that there are no universal recipes that provide managers and entrepreneurs guidelines to maximize the survival rate. Instead of it, it is easy to see recommendations to take into account the context in which the activity takes place (Dupleix and D'Annunzio, 2018). Authors such as Bhede (1996) established some previous questions to run the entrepreneurial activity. Once achieving all these previous steps, the last of them was to execute the strategy.

Figure 1.1: Questions entrepreneurs must answer before initiating the activity.



Source: Adaptation from Bhede (1996).

However, what does it mean to execute the strategy? In terms of Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart (2010), the business model (BM) can be understood as the reflection of the firm's realized strategy or how firms do business and compete. Therefore, the following section is oriented to illustrate the most exciting business models in this dissertation.

1.2.1 The definition of business models.

Although the concept and typologies of BM are vast (Teece, 2010), the analysis of the entrepreneurship and how they create value-added seems an adequate unit of analysis (Lambert and Davidson, 2013).

For entrepreneurs, the BM configuration can be the first and the most critical process to develop economic activity. In the words of Zott et al. (2011), it is the configuration of the binomial structure-strategy that best fits the requirements of the firm. Besides, Magretta pointed out that “*the business model describes, as a system, how the pieces of a business fit together*” (2002:6). So, the BM configuration involves other decisions upon activities such as target customers, scope, alliances, suppliers, stakeholders, skills, products, hierarchical shape, or marketing.

From another perspective, Chesbrough (2010:355) focused on the BM functions instead of providing a definition. This author considers BM must:

- 1) To articulate the value proposition (i.e., the value created for users by an offering based on technology);
- 2) To identify a market segment and specify the revenue generation mechanism (i.e., users to whom technology is useful and for what purpose);
- 3) To define the structure of the value chain required to create and distribute the offering and complementary assets needed to support the position in the chain;
- 4) To detail the revenue mechanism(s) by which the firm will be paid for the service offered;
- 5) To estimate the cost structure and potential profit (given value proposition and value chain structure);
- 6) To describe the position of the firm within the value network linking suppliers and customers (identifying potential substitutive and competitors) and
- 7) To formulate the competitive strategy by which the innovating firm will gain and hold an advantage over rivals.

1.2.2 The business model taxonomy.

Given the importance of BM concept and configuration, many authors have developed their classification of BM. The following table exemplifies some of them:

Table 1.1. Business model classification.

MN	Author(s)	Typology/Classification	
Categorical BM	Timmers (1998)	e-shops e-Procurement e-Malls e-Auctions Virtual communities Collaboration platforms	Third-parties marketplaces Value chain integrators Value chain providers Information brokerage Trust and other third-party services
	Tapscott et al. (2000)	Agora Aggregation Distributive networks	Alliance Value Chain
	Linder and Cantrell (2000)	Price models Convenience models Commodity-plus models Experience models	Channel models Intermediary models Trust models Innovation models
	Weill and Vitale (2001)	Content provider Direct customer Full-service provider Intermediary Shared infrastructure	Value net integrator Virtual community The whole of enterprise/Government
	Rappa (2001)	Brokerage model Advertising model Infomediary model Merchant model Manufacturer model	Affiliate model Community model Subscription model Utility model
	Applegate (2001)	Focuser distributor models Portal models	Producer models Infrastructure models
BM based on their components	Afuah and Tucci (2003)	Customer value Scope Pricing Revenue source	Connected activities Implementation Capabilities Sustainability
	Papakiriakopoulos and Poulymenakou (2001)	Dependencies among activities (coordination mechanisms) Collective competition (Relations with the environment)	Customer value Core competencies.
	Alt and Zimmerman (2001)	Mission Structure Processes	Revenues Legal issues Technology
	Boston Consulting Group (Lindgardt et al., 2009); Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010)	Market niches Value proposition Distribution channels Relations with customers	Incomes' sources Key resources Key activities Key partners Costs' structure.

Source: Own elaboration based on Osterwalder (2004).

The BM analysis caught the attention of researchers from the boom of electronic platforms and stores. That is why many authors studied this concept based on the new organizational alternatives. Many authors have proposed different categorizations of electronic BM (E.g., Timmers 1998; Weill and Vitale, 2001; Rappa, 2001).

Other authors such as Tapscott et al., (2000), differentiate five types of BM, according to control and value integration. First, the *Agora* model refers to that space (electronic) in which they are found seller and buyer, and where they negotiate themselves, a price agreed upon. Examples are *eBay* or *NASDAQ*. Secondly, when the negotiation is constrained, customers look for products or services that best suit their needs. This is the *aggregated* model. Examples are *Amazon* or *Aliexpress*. Thirdly, in the case that a special adjustment between the needs of the client and the product is required, the vendors offer configurations to the client's service. Therefore, the customer is part of the *product's value chain*. Examples are *Cisco Systems* or *Dell*. Fourth, when the sellers and buyers collaborate to create personalized services for third parties, they create an alliance. Finally, *distributive networks*, are those companies that help other electronic companies. Beyond the electronic BM, other authors have published their classification using more traditional companies. The published by Linder and Cantrell (2000) is an example.

Applying their classification in private health services, it is possible to see some examples. First, given the legitimacy of the independent BM, these could be classified as *trust-based BM*, while the associated BM could belong to the category of BM based on the innovation of the service (*Innovation models*), or even those that maximize profitability (*Channel models*).

All previous literature has categorized BM. However, some authors consider a mistake to do it in this way, given the blurred lines among different BM. Therefore, there is another current of authors who have classified them according to the intensity of their components. Morris et al. (2005) summarized classifications from other authors explaining their BM classification:

Table 1.2. Examples of BM components.

Source	Specific components
Horowitz (1996)	Price, product, distribution, organizational characteristics, and technology
Viscio and Pasternak (1996)	Global core, governance, business units, services, and linkages
Timmers (1998)	Product/service/information flow architecture, business actors and roles, actor benefits, revenue sources, and marketing strategy
Markides (1999)	Product innovation, customer relationship, infrastructure management, and financial aspects
Donath (1999)	Customer understanding, marketing tactics, corporate governance, and intranet/extranet capabilities
Gordijn et al. (2001)	Actors, market segments, value offering, value activity, stakeholder network, value interfaces, value ports, and value exchanges
Linder and Cantrell (2000)	Pricing model, revenue model, channel model, commerce process model, Internet-enabled commerce relationship, organizational form, and value proposition
Gartner (2003)	Market offering, competencies, core technology investments, and bottom line
Hamel (2001)	Core strategy, strategic resources, value network, and customer interface
Petrovic et al. (2001)	Value model, resource model, production model, customer relations model, revenue model, capital model, and market model
Dubosson-Torbay et al. (2001)	Products, customer relationship, infrastructure and network of partners, and financial aspects
Afuah and Tucci (2003)	Customer value, scope, price, revenue, connected activities, implementation, capabilities, and sustainability
Weill and Vitale (2001)	Strategic objectives, value proposition, revenue sources, success factors, channels, core competencies, customer segments, and IT infrastructure
Applegate (2001)	Concept, capabilities, and value
Amit and Zott (2001)	Transaction content, transaction structure, and transaction governance
Alt and Zimmerman (2001)	Mission, structure, processes, revenues, legalities and technology
Rayport and Jaworski (2001)	Value cluster, market space offering, resource system, and financial model
Betz (2002)	Resources, sales, profits, and capital

Source: Morris et al. (2005).

In this way, some classifications such as the one from Osterwalder and Pigneur (CANVAS model, 2010) or that from Boston Consulting Group (Lindardt et al., 2009) have been widely studied and applied.

After this small literature review, the main conclusion is the coexistence of many classifications of BM. Besides, two trends can be assumed: Whereas some authors have published BM categories, others have considered analyzing them according to the intensity of some aspects.

However, it would be wrong (and mostly impossible) to test all the pieces that shape each BM. The “piece” that takes our attention is the alliances between the

entrepreneur and other environmental agents such as networks or public organizations. This topic is interesting for researchers because the entrepreneurs can decide to establish their company alone (independently), or trying to look for partners (signing associations with networks such as franchising chains, co-operatives or bargaining centers).

Related to these associated business models (ABM), **franchising chains** had appeared recently in many non-traditional franchising activities. Besides, another BM such as **co-operatives** has shown better survival rates and financial performance in agri-food activities. However, this BM has shown some problems related to governance and strategy, reducing their impact on other activities (Cantarero et al., 2013). Finally, **bargaining centers** is a young business model operating mainly on groceries that have landed recently on KIBS. These examples of ABM suggest that not all BM fits equally and excellently well. We believe that there must be an adaptation of each BM to the activity or service they provide and the objectives of the firms. In the following sections discuss the most important BM.

1.2.3 The independent business model (IBM).

The introduction of this research argued that entrepreneurs who have established IBM have to bear with all roles related to the activity and other roles related to the entrepreneurial activity, assuming all entrepreneurial dimensions proposed by Lumpkin and Dess (1996).

Similarly, Gerber (1997) established that independent entrepreneurs must develop three roles related to entrepreneurial behavior. These are the technician, the manager, and the creative. However, all these roles are permanently in conflict. The more time spent on one role, the less profit will be obtained from the other two. Therefore, it is feasible that some entrepreneurs delegate activities when they feel work overloaded.

Entrepreneurs who decide to create IBM are usually self-employees. These entrepreneurs are different from “regular” businessmen (Bögenhold et al., 2014).

From these authors, businessmen incorporate “egoistic” motivations, whereas self-employed people are related to “altruistic” ones. This affirmation is appropriate to analyze activities such as dentistry, physiotherapy, or optometry.

Despite this, nowadays there is a period of change in these activities. “Egoistic” and “altruistic” entrepreneurs develop their profession at the same time. As a result, a debate emerged from practitioners: traditional self-employed may ask the professionalism and ethics of businesspeople (E.g., Reid, 2009). In the same vein, Trathen and Gallagher (2009) affirm that these activities are evolving more economical. Therefore, some businessmen surpass this weakness creating their companies using different associated business models.

It is apparent that entrepreneurs who consider work overloaded or uncomfortable assuming some roles were more likely to delegate some tasks. In this sense, the associate business models gather some advantages these entrepreneurs are looking for.

1.2.4 The associated business models (ABM).

Associated business models (ABM) were developed as a response of some entrepreneurs to obtain better results of their professional activity. Those entrepreneurs were able to see inefficiencies from traditional IBM. As a solution, ABM emerged. This section explains the most ABM operating on Knowledge-Intensive Based Services (KIBS) such as dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy. ABM used in this dissertation are the franchising, co-operatives, and bargain centres.

THE FRANCHISING BUSINESS MODEL

The history of franchising.

The history of franchising began at the fall of the Roman Empire. The invaders from the north were allowed to live in conquered lands having some privileges in terms of taxes; without paying anything. At that time, those people called themselves “*franc*,” which means “*free*.” In the middle age, some lords allowed their knights to charge some taxes to the population. They used “franchising letters” to collect extra money. Later, in Germany, some brewmasters started to sell their beer elaboration recipes to other people, charging some money for the information.

In modern business management, the franchising business model (FBM) was created by “*Singer Sewing Machine Co*” in the middle of the 19th century. It was developed to deliver and sell their sewing machines. Later, during the twenties, petrol companies start to operate under FBM. This business model was introduced to other sectors by other companies such as “*Mc’ Donalds*,” “*Sheraton*.” However, it was “*Coca-Cola*” who expands this concept around the world. Nowadays, FBM is a worldwide phenomenon. Remarkable is the impact on restaurant and hostelry, where the most recognizable franchising chains are operating in these activities.

The concept of franchising as BM and motivations for using it.

According to the Royal Spanish Academy of Language, franchising is “*the granting of exploitation rights of a product, activity or trade name granted by a company to one or more persons in a given area*.” Deepen in management the International Franchising Association define it as¹⁰:

“A method for expanding a business and distributing goods and services through a licensing relationship. In franchising, franchisors (a person or company that grants the license to a third party for the conducting of a business under their marks) not only specify the products and services that will be offered by the franchisees (a

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.franchise.org/what-is-a-franchise>

person or company who is granted the license to do business under the trademark and trade name by the franchisor) but also provide them with an operating system, brand and support.”

Traditionally, the most important motivations to use franchising are (Fulop, 2000):

- To obtain faster market penetration.
- To raise financial capital.
- To acquire some local knowledge.

According to different authors, some factors affect franchising success positively.

These are:

- **Sector activity:** Shane and Spell (1998) have found that food activities show better results than retail or service activities. In the same vein, Rad et al. (2009) reached the same conclusion: restaurants and hostelry show better performance than service activities and retail.
- **Refine the concept:** Successful franchisors take time to refine their system (Dant et al., 2007). That means rapid franchising growth is not related to performance.
- **Communication issues:** Franchisees want to feel confident with the franchisor. For this reason, trust (Cumberland and Githens, 2012; Okoroafor, 2014) and the use of high information richness media (Gorovaia and Windsperger, 2013a) are crucial to maintaining the relationship between franchisors and franchisees.
- **There must be a fit between governance and resources:** the standardization process is better instead of adaptation but, depending on the tacitness of the process, the adaptation should be higher (Barthélemy, 2008). In any case, some adaptation level is always required (Cox and Mason, 2007), maintaining the chain uniformity (Pardo-del-Val et al., 2014). Following Kaufmann and Eroglu (1999), franchisors allow franchisees to adapt the system using peripheral elements of franchise systems, but the core elements remain standardized.
- **The importance of intangible assets:** The most successful franchising chains attribute their success to intangible assets, and they improve them. So, brand name, specific intangible system assets, and exploration capabilities are important (Gorovaia and Windsperger, 2013b). Other factors, such as network size, age (experience), and internationalization, are positively related to network performance (Fadairo and Lachimba, 2014). For example, Williams (1999) found that franchisees are twice more likely to receive business assistance than other business models.

Recent studies of franchising as BM.

FBM is studied using a huge amount of theories (Combs et al., 2011). In the following table, we have a summary of the most important theories used to explain the FBM.

Table 1.3: The franchising business model and their theories.

Theory	Seminar Papers	Premise	Contributions
Agency Theory	Ross, 1973; Jensen and Meckling, 1976, Jensen and Fama, 1983a, 1983b, Eisenhardt, 1988, 1989	Big companies are not efficient if they try to maintain total control. The agent is created to ensure quality levels. The principal delegates formal authority to the agent.	Lafontaine, 1992; Sen, 1993; Wimmer and Garen, 1997; Michael and Moore, 1995; Rao and Srinivasan, 2001; Vázquez, 2005; Maruyama and Yumashita, 2012; Eisenhardt, 1989; Shane, 1998; Vázquez, 2007; Hossain and Wang, 2008; Mellewigt et al, 2011; El-Akremit et al., 2011; Frazer et al., 2012.
Scarcity resource theory	Oxenfeldt and Kelly, 1969	Firms franchise in order to access scarce resources and expand rapidly.	Gillis and Castrogiovanni, 2012; Watson, 2008; Norton, 1988; Combs and Ketchen, 1999; Kirby and Watson, 1999; González-Díaz and Solís-Rodríguez, 2012; Grünhagen and Mittelstaedt, 2005.
Transaction cost theory and theory of the firm	Coase, 1937; Rubin, 1973; 1978; Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Williamson, 1979; Salgado, 2003.	Companies must find the optimal size. Franchising can expand the firm faster, sharing the risk with franchisees.	Dahlstrom and Nygaard, 1999; Burton et al., 2000; Alon, 2006, Gorovaia and Windsperger, 2018
The resource-based view of the firm	Penrose, 1959; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997.	Franchising chains contribute to the relationship with brand value, business configuration, advertising, whereas franchisees contribute with local market and culture knowledge, entry fee and royalties	Fladmoe-Linquist, 1996; Juste et al., 2006; Barthélemy, 2008; Michael and Combs, 2008; Gorovaia and Windsperger, 2013b; Hua and Dalbor, 2013; Gillis et al., 2014; Salar and Salar, 2014;

Source: Own Elaboration.

For the Agency theory, one topic that has specially called the attention is the equilibrium between the parties. In this sense, the entry and royalties fees have been the main characters (e.g., Lafontaine, 1992; Wimmer and Garen, 1997; Vazquez, 2005; Maruyama and Yumashita, 2012). Other issues widely studied have been the agency contract (Eisenhardt, 1989; Shane and Spell, 1998 or

Hossein and Wang, 2008); the opportunistic behavior and satisfaction between parties (El-Akreimi et al., 2011; Mellewigt, 2011 or Frazer et al., 2012).

The Resource scarcity theory has been widely used to explain the franchising phenomena as well. Some examples are the reasons to become a franchising (Gillis and Castrogiovanni, 2012), franchisee selection process (Watson, 2008), franchisee motivations (González-Díaz and Solís-Rodríguez, 2012), growth strategy (Grünhagen and Mittelstaedt, 2005) or more recently, the proportion of franchising failure and success (Madanoglu and Castrogiovanni, 2018).

The Transaction costs theory has been used to explain issues related to geographical dispersion, local market characteristics, or legal issues of the franchising agreements. In this sense, internationalization can be the most important issue dealt with this theory. Examples of it are the paper of Alon (2006). This author studies the role of the master franchisee in the franchising expansion, and the predictors to emerge this figure. Another example of this theory applied to franchise literature is the contribution of Dahlstrom and Nygaard (1999). These authors analyze some issues related to TCT in franchising such as opportunism, monitoring, bargaining, and adaptation costs in the franchising relation. Recently, Gorovaia and Windsperger (2018) have found that franchisee's transaction-specific investments and intangible knowledge-based resources are determinants of franchising contract duration.

Finally, from the resource-based view, the FBM have called the attention to study the brand as a resource (Barthélemy, 2008; Gorovaia and Windsperger, 2013b), the relevance of intangible resources (Juste et al, 2006), franchising performance (Hua and Dalbor, 2013), standardization of processes (Gillis et al., 2014) or franchising failure (Michael and Combs, 2008) and internationalization (Fladmoe-Linquist, 1996; Alon et al., 2012; Michael, 2014).

The gap detected.

Although franchising has been analyzed from many perspectives, we have found some gaps. First, from agency theory, some activities represent challenges for FBM. In KIBS, the role of principal (franchisor) – and agent (franchisee) has been minimizing due to the characteristics of such activities (Navarro-Sanfélix and Puig, 2018). In this sense, the knowledge shared and the role of governance with the institutional influences play an important role in these activities, reducing the franchisor bargaining power.

Secondly, using the resource scarcity theory (RST), this theory has shed some light on the FBM in many aspects, although most of the research has been treated in monetary terms. (e.g., González-Díaz and Rodríguez-Solís, 2012). The intangible resources play an important role in scarcity terms in FBM. However, researchers have avoided some of them. For example, Hossain and Wang (2008) have treated the experience as a limited resource, Watson (2008) points out that one of the scarcest resources is to find the appropriate franchisee, tying down the franchisor's growth capability. To sum up, although franchisees resources are focused on financial resources, working time, and local knowledge, they can provide other things such as experience, market niches, or innovation. At this point, the contribution from RST is especially useful for franchisors, because it can be exhausting for them to find all requirements to franchise outlets.

Thirdly, from the resource-based view, it is possible to conclude that the intangible resources usually belong to the franchisor. However, this premise can be wrong in some franchised activities. Traditionally, franchisees have to acquire a “submissive role” in the franchise relationship. They must follow the rules and procedures ordered by the franchisor. However, for some activities, this is not possible, due to the idiosyncratic complexity of KIBS. For example, Windsperger (2013) illustrated the especially difficulties in finding franchisees with the franchisor requirements. Given this, the relation between franchisee and franchisor can be more complex in activities such as architecture, lawyers, dentists, optometrists, or physiotherapists.

Finally, some researchers are calling for papers in order to fill some detected gaps to overcome the called “*the Mc’ Donalds Effect*” (Dant, 2008). On the other side, many articles claim to use a great variety of theories and recombining them to find new solutions the FBM must face (Combs et al., 2004). It is reasonable to think that in KIBS, the institutions play an important role as the mimetic and normative isomorphism are important factors for the entrepreneur.

THE CO-OPERATIVES.

The origin of co-operatives.

During the XVIII century, co-operativism emerged as a response to the industrial revolution, to improve the labor conditions at the factories. One of the most prominent activists cited in the literature was Robert Owen, who changed the vision of factories, from competitive to co-operative activities. (Monzón-Campos, 2003).

In Spain, although the co-operativism movement has had much influence on farming activities, it is present in almost all activities such as grocery (*Consum*), multidisciplinary (*Mondragón group*, a co-operative of firms), optometry (*Zas Visión*, *Multiópticas*), chemistry (*Cofaran*) or education (*Florida Universitaria*).

In the development of this BM, the first rule was the Law of Trade Unions of Farmers, in 1906. This law obliged farmers to register their activity following some accounting books (Medina-Albadalejo, 2013). Today there are a plethora of types of co-operatives. The most important are (Vienney, 1980):

- **Co-operatives of owners:** sharing the required activities to do their exploitation tasks.
- **Co-operatives of associated jobs:** owners operate separately but sharing some issues.
- **Consumer co-operatives:** those who use the products supplied by the co-operative. Examples are flat-buyers or insurance).
- **Saving co-operatives:** they are linked with co-operatives of owners or consumers, although members use the credit of these co-operatives.

The concept of co-operatives as BM and basic principles.

Theoretically speaking, the main aim of co-operatives is non-economic performance. Compared to other companies, many authors pointed out that co-operatives have some difficulties in competing against them (Martínez, 2008). Following the International Co-operative Alliance (IAC) concept, co-operatives are “*autonomous associations of people united voluntarily to meet their common needs and aspirations in economic, social and cultural matters through a jointly owned and democratically managed company.*”¹¹ This definition includes economic, social, and cultural aims at the same level. Although economic performance is important, it is not the only one.

Co-operatives companies must follow some principles and values: volunteer and open membership; democratic control of top management team; economic participation of their members; autonomy and independence; education, training, and information; co-operation among co-operatives and concern for the community. Following Zeuli and Cropp (2004:1), the co-operative performance is based on three principles:

- The **use-owner principle** considers that members must bear the co-operative's capital, and their contribution must be equal.
- The **use-control principle** means that the co-operative will manage the company directly or indirectly through their representatives on the top management team.
- Finally, the **owner-benefits** mean that members will share the economic benefits and risks of their company.

Recent studies of co-operatives as BM

There are not many studies that have studied co-operatives as BM in KIBS. Although there are many articles about co-operatives, many of them talk about governance, social issues, territory development, or financial issues in primary and manufacturing industries. This feature can be done due to their social and non-economic orientation.

¹¹ <https://ica.coop/es/node/10584>

Considering Co-operatives as BM, some papers such as Reynolds (2013) or Birchall and Ketilson (2009) has defined some guidelines: co-operative members have some rights and benefits derived from their membership, such as control over the company. That means their decisions have an impact on business decisions. Co-operativist members obtain feelings like “*loyalty, commitment, shared knowledge, member participation, underpinned by strong economic incentives*” (2009:17). Besides, members can also obtain goods at the lowest possible price.

Many of these recent studies have focused on the role of social capital. For example, the work of Deng and Hendrikse (2017) has analyzed the additional value of social interaction in co-operatives among their members. Some advantages they propose are related to shared knowledge and risk-sharing. However, they are aware of some constraints that the entrepreneurs in this BM must face. As an example, they suggest the market orientation can undermine the co-operation between members, especially when this market orientation may affect social interactions.

Other interesting topics where the co-operatives are analyzed are the competitiveness of agro-food companies. For example, doing a Delphi method, Lajara-Camilleri and Server-Izquierdo (2017) have studied the most important factors that can raise the competitiveness of co-operative companies. Following this article, market orientation and innovation are the most important issues that agri-food co-operatives must face. From another point, the paper of Audebrand et al. (2017) explores the co-operative BM challenges and advantages in the education field. According to these authors, teachers can reject this BM due to their innovativeness as a system. However, this organizational shape can introduce new insights in terms of new techniques to teach, better collaboration between professors, or better interaction with their students.

The gap detected.

Considering co-operatives as BM, there are not many studies in KIBS. So, this is an opportunity to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of this BM. For

example, in the Spanish case, *COS co-operative*¹² is a multidisciplinary co-operative with members that come from many health activities. In dentistry, *Codental* and *Coproden* are co-operatives of dental prosthetics allocated in the Basque Country and Galicia. In the same region, *Arbore da Vida Celta S. Coop* is shaped by four physiotherapists who joined this association. In the case of optometry, the size of companies is bigger, and most of them are older than dentists or physiotherapists. *Zas Vision* chain involves more than one hundred optometrists with their clinics. Another example is *Cione Group* with 95 professionals.

Besides, these numbers are a very good justification to analyses the intellectual capital they could have and manage. Although the relational capital has been widely analyzed on co-operatives BM, the human and structural capital has received less attention.

THE BARGAIN CENTERS.

Compared to the other two BM, the bargain centers (BC) can be considered the less centralized BM, where the entrepreneurs bear more tasks. When an independent entrepreneur joins a BC, he or she is looking for better-supplying prices, externalizing some auxiliary tasks that will not increase the service value or product such as accounting, information systems, or logistics. As a result, the decision-making process is more centralized in the entrepreneur.

The origins of bargain centers.

The main aim of these BM is to combine some costs intending to alleviate them among the subscribed companies, increasing their competitiveness by using scale economies (Muradas and Rodríguez, 2010).

In Spain, bargain centers (BC) were conceived during the sixties to negotiate advertising services on television, radio, and press, dividing their costs between

¹² <http://www.cos.coop/es/>

many small agencies (Alvarez, 2012). These BM had a small boom in Spain during the eighties.

The concept of bargain centers as BM and key elements.

There is not too much information about BC as a BM in the research field (Moyano-Navarro, 2014). The Spanish Bargain Centre Association (ANCECO) consider that “*BC is an operator that, having resources, can develop activities and provide services to independent companies that, in a spirit of co-operation, have been associated with their organization through internal regulations to improve their competitive position in the market*” (2000:10). Following Moyano-Navarro, the main aim of BC is to achieve scale economies, but there are others such as knowledge sharing among their associated members, or creating relational links among them. (2014:16).

ANCECO’s green book (2000) establishes some elements that define the nature of bargain centers. These are:

- a. Operate with their **legal personality**.
- b. Operate with their **economic resources**.
- c. To **help a group of independent companies**, whatever the legal formula adopted.
- d. There must be a **spirit of co-operation** between BC and its partners.
- e. There must be **operational links** beyond the specific relationship, and these must be allocated in a specific sector.
- f. The relationship between the BC and its suppliers is also established through **specific regulations** of each BC.
- g. The main purpose of the BC is **to improve the competitive position** of its associates through obtaining economies of scale.
- h. BC must have **enough bargain power** to guarantee transactions.
- i. The offer of activities and services must be structured, and the BC central must have **communication mechanisms** with their associates.

Following ANCECO’s green book (2000), the following table summarizes the different types of BC according to the type of partners, scope, and services offered.

Table 1.4: Bargain center typology.

BC classification	Type of BC
Type of partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retailing BC: to provide retailers - Wholesaling BC: to provide wholesalers, the BC is oriented to offer services to this type of partner. - Manufacturing BC: oriented to manufacturers, is oriented to buy semi-finished products or raw materials. - Mixed BC: When BC adopts many structures described above.
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local - Regional - National - International - Worldwide
Service provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operational BC: those BC who assume the risk of buying input products for their partners and the services they provide (logistics, advertising, post-sale services, and technology). - Negotiation BC: Are those who their main aim is to negotiate the suppliers of the BC partners. The BC only assumes financial risks because they coordinate the payments between suppliers and partners. In these cases, BC can receive some royalties for negotiating.

Source: ANCECO, 2000.

For Mollá and Sanchez, BC “constitute a special category of alliances, because their main aim is not to grow outside the sales network of the companies that make it up. The objective of these centers is the joint purchase of goods and services (...) besides, these alliances can be a source of knowledge between their associated members” (2000:44)

Recent studies on bargain centers as BM.

There is a huge lack of research on BC as BM. This situation can be due to some reasons. First, Hermoso de Mendoza (2007) considers that the different ABM present blurred lines that are increasing every day. It is easy to find some problems with separate franchising or bargain centers. For example, this author saw some similarities in the outlet requirements, entry fee or legal development. Additionally, Di Lernia and Terry (2019) propose 4 types of franchising business model, some out of them being very close to BC (Flexible and Quasi-Franchising). Second, there is trouble with the concept. Although in Spain, this BM is named literally “*purchasing centers*,” in others, it is “*bargain centers*.” As a result, our literature review has focused on Spanish research related to this business model, analyzing just a few studies.

Muradas and Rodríguez (2010) have studied the BC in travel agencies. These authors have noticed that these companies are integrated into many steps of the value chain, allowing them to compete at many levels. This paper does a benchmarking of one BC of this sector (*Travel Advisors Guild – TAG*). In order to overcome the threat from internet travel pages, TAG companies have decided to broaden their horizons in terms of value chain activities, although some travel agencies analyzed register a worse performance results.

The paper of Fuentes et al. (2013) highlights the absence of literature on BC, analyzing grocery BC operating in Colombia. This BM appeared in this country as a response to the arrival of Carrefour mega-stores as a direct competitor. Although the authors have pointed out that BC allow saving supplying costs, they have added better provisions available to the outlets operating under this formula.

Another example is the findings provided by Torres and Marías (2015), analyzing the possibilities to create a BC in a hostelry in Malaga (Spain). Although the participants agreed to create this BM, some limitations emerged, constraining the efficiency of the value chain improvement. To surpass this limitation, the BC are designed considering the collaboration of public organizations, and the services that BC must provide must be logistics, telematics tracking and consulting, product management, and payment facilities.

The gap detected.

Recently, Bocatonda et al. (2018) published a paper illustrating the main advantages and disadvantages related to BC, showing some possibilities to do future research. The main advantages are the bargaining power provided by the central of purchasing. Besides, the storage building uses to be near the clinics. That means faster speed on supplying. Another advantage is the homogenous brand through the other clinics associated.

However, in terms of disadvantages, this BM share many constraints related to other ABM. For example, the cost structure, coordination required, opportunism,

or supplying constraints established by the central. The following table summarizes the contribution of this paper.

Table 1.5: Advantages and disadvantages of bargaining centers.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater bargaining power - Joint storage - Homogeneous marketing - Price reduction - Proration of costs - Brand recognition - Improvement in logistics - Modernization of the strategy - Competitiveness - Improvement of customer service - Specialization of buyers - Access to suppliers - Reduction in the number of operations - Combination of know-how among companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company constitution - Difficulty in establishing control mechanisms and incentives - Double taxation - Information asymmetry - Differences in the size of the participants / Volume of orders - Slowness in decision-making processes - Cost-benefit - Conflict of interests - Cultural change - Lack of commitment / Opportunism / Rivalry between firms - Expectations of low prices - Assortment / Strength of regional brands - Logistics - Lack of public program support

Source: Boccatonda et al., 2018.

To sum up, the entrepreneurs in KIBS can overcome different liabilities via the adoption of the business model that fits better with their strategy and objectives. On the one side, the traditional BM is independent. Although the control level is high, it also has some limitations. On the other side, the ABM delegates roles and tasks. Although ABM use to be more expensive, they offer some advantages. For Example, the BC have appeared as a response to the tight rules that franchising has but maintaining the independence that co-operative members do not have.

Moreover, it can be considered more independent compared to franchising in terms of property rights (that means, entrepreneurs who do not want supervision from other parties) but compared to co-operatives, are more independent in terms of financial issues (the economic performance essentially relies on the entrepreneur's actions). Besides, they get a well recognizable brand to attract customers. However, this autonomy has some disadvantages in terms of knowledge transfer programs and the higher number of tasks to manage (both borne by the entrepreneur).

1.3 The professional associations.

1.3.1 Antecedents and legal issues.

After seeing the main aspects of the entrepreneur activity and the different types of alliances available, it is possible to highlight that the relationship between entrepreneurs and these BM is complex and full of challenges for all of them, especially in the KIBS. In this sense, professional associations (PA) organize these activities. These organizations appeared *“as study societies that sprang up from a desire for social interaction between those members doing the same work, sharing papers for discussion, protecting their members and developing collective solutions to common problems”* (Rusaw, 1995: 217).

These organizations were created *“initially at least, in accordance with this socially constructed reality because to do so reduces ambiguity and uncertainty”* (Greenwood et al., 2002:59). So, PA can be defined as *“an organization consisting of mission, objectives, structures, and processes catering for the education and development of a voluntary membership situated in the intersecting contexts of specific fields of knowledge and practices, clientele and values”* (Rusaw, 1995: 218).

In Spain, the origin of their legal power is based on Law 2/1974, related to PA¹³. In Art. 2 of this law, although it does not define what PA is, it specifies the most important aspect of them. According to this point, the professions under PA influence will be done under free competence and according to national legal development. These PA raise under the petition of professionals, having only one on each national area. According to art. 5, their functions are:

- a. To benefit or protecting the interests of consumers and users of the services of their members.
- b. To perform such functions and entrusted to them by the Administration and collaborate with this by conducting studies, issuing reports, preparation of statistics, and other purposes related to their activities, which may be requested or agree formulate its initiative.

¹³ In Spain is called *“Colegio Profesional”* referred to professional associations.

- c. To represent established members by law for the performance of their goals.
- d. To participate in the councils or advisory bodies of the Administration in competitiveness in each of the professions.
- e. To be represented in the University Councils.
- f. To participate in study plans and reporting standards rules to educational centers corresponding to the respective professions and maintain permanent contact with them and prepare the information needed to facilitate access to the professional life of the new professionals.
- g. To represent and defend the profession in the face of the Administration, Institutions, Courts, entities, and individuals with legitimacy to be part of any disputes affecting the professional interests and exercise the rights under request by the law.
- h. To provide the courts, under the laws, a list of their members that could be required to act as expert witnesses in judicial matters, or appoint itself thereof as appropriate.
- i. To order in their area of competence, the professional activity of the members, ensuring professional ethics, dignity, and respect for the rights of individuals and exercise disciplinary faculty in professional and collegiate order.
- j. To organize common activities and services of interest to the members, being professional, educational, cultural, healthcare, and welfare and similar, providing financial support by any means necessary.
- k. To seek harmony and co-operation among the members, preventing unfair competition between them.
- l. To adopt measures to prevent professional intrusion.
- m. To mediate in conciliation or arbitration in matters that, for professional reasons, emerge among the members.
- n. To resolve at the request of interested parties, discrepancies may arise in the fulfillment of the obligations of work done by the members in the exercise of the profession.
- o. To encourage and develop mediation and conduct an arbitration, national and international, in accordance with the provisions of the legislation.
- p. To report in judicial or administrative proceedings that professional fees were discussed.
- q. To ensure the collection of perceptions, wages, or professional fees when the member freely and expressly requested in cases where the Association has created appropriate services and conditions to be determined in the Statutes of each Association.
- r. To supervise the professional work of association under the terms provided in Article 13 of this law.
- s. To organize, where appropriate, courses for the training of postgraduates.
- t. To facilitate the solution of housing problems of their members, for which purpose, it will participate in the official councils for each profession believes that the Ministry of Living place.
- u. To comply with and enforce the PA, special laws and professional statutes and internal regulations and rules and decisions taken by collegiate bodies, on matters within its competence.
- v. To respond to requests for information on their members and on sanctions imposed on them and requests for inspection or investigation that are

formulated by any competent authority of a Member State of the European Union.

Besides, Spanish PA have formal legitimacy in their activities (ability to develop public policies). According to the art. 9 of Law 2/1974, it translates some legitimacy into actions such as:

- Solve conflicts between colleges
- Create college's statutes
- Execute coercive power (disciplinary acts)
- Represent the members of other organizations
- Improve members' employability.

1.3.2 Advantages of joining professional associations.

According to Greenwood et al. (2002), PA exist for three reasons:

- **Allow organizations within the same community to interact.** As a result of this interaction, members approve some conducts and behavioral features. That means PA will create some homogeneity (stability and predictability) over their members in terms of education, procedures, or acts.
- **PA can represent their members in front of other associations or organisms.** The result is an increase in their bargaining power in front of other agents.
- **Guarantee of quality.** According to institutional theory, PA can ensure beliefs and practices associated with certifications. Besides, some PA have used coercive power in order to preserve some attitudes.

Other reasons to join PA are to find some learning mechanisms adapted to the profession. For example, Rusaw (1995) believes that PA can provide some learning tools to their members. First, because PA provides updated knowledge in terms of technical training, preparing individuals to develop new roles or socialize among themselves. Second, PA can provide new frames of reference, adding new environmental phenomena. Third, PA can facilitate changes. It can improve the profession by using new training. Professionals are more ready to learn when they belong to PA.

The PA influences have been studied using the family companies' background. According to Parada et al., (2010), PA can influence positively with their values.

Traditional and old values are removed to adopt some other behavior in order to be more professionalized. In this sense, the contribution did by PA is positively related to family companies. In the same vein, Dickson and Arcodia suggest that *“PA play a significant role in facilitating the education and advancement of event management professionals working in the industry”* (2010:237).

1.3.3 Disadvantages of joining professional associations.

Nevertheless, PA has some critics from researchers. For example, Arruñada (1992) said these associations have hidden interests behind the public image. That means the PA have advantages avoiding market rules. According to this author, some “unfair” practices are:

- **Service prices control:** Some PA directly manages the member’s payment in order to control those services. If there are too many members of society, it can constrain the survival ratio.
- **Quality services:** They use the quality level provided by their members as a smokescreen (1992:2). High-quality levels mean that some populations cannot afford their services. As a response, people try to look for low-quality services named by PA “intrusiveness,” and those practices are prosecuting by these associations.
- **Retraining:** Although PA offers courses to its members, it is common that PA do not follow their members while they apply their knowledge.
- **Limitations to their members:** Some PA does not allow their members to have advertising or growth strategies. This argument ensures competitiveness, but, according to Arruñada, it allows some inefficient companies to survive, limiting the power of their members, ensuring their own (PA) control, reducing the quality level as a result.

Besides, other authors have found some problems related to the PA acts. Rusaw (1995) is concerned about the tacit exclusive right to interpret and control specialized knowledge, and the huge amount of bureaucracy PA usually use.

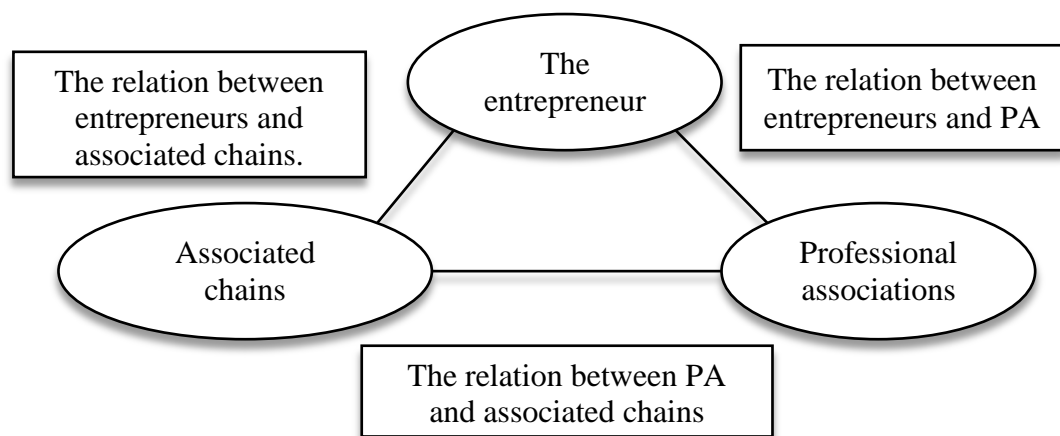
Summarizing, the main aims of PA are to organize their sectors and protect their professionals, establishing some levels of quality, avoiding intrusism from other people. In reverse, the PA ask for some levels of performance, retraining, and updating knowledge.

To sum up, the present section studied the three parties involved in our study. Although all organizations (entrepreneurs, networks, and PA) can work separately from the others, the present dissertation aims to study how some business models can operate, taking into account the different interests of these three actors. The interrelations among them and main characteristics will be discussed in the following section.

1.4 The relationships between the parties.

Having analyzed the entrepreneurs, the ABM, and the PA, it is necessary to study how they organize and what are the relationships they have between them. To do it, here I will review and discuss the mutual influences in the next three pairs of relationships. That means first, the connection between independent entrepreneurs and associated chains; second, the influence of PA on independent entrepreneurs will be analyzed; and third, the conflict between the PA and the associated chains.

Figure 1.2: The relations between the parties in this dissertation.



Source: Own Elaboration.

1.4.1 The entrepreneurs and the associated companies.

After seeing all these BM, it could be said that the three types of alliances have some issues in common. For example, in the Moyano-Navarro's work (2014) it is considered that BC, franchising, and co-operatives are vertical contractual marketing systems. However, the main differences between these BM are the dependence among companies. Although all clinics have delegated some tasks to their central (being franchising chains, co-operative or BC), the level of dependence between the outlet and the center is different.

At this point, it seems mandatory to create a table to see the differences and similarities among these three ABM (Table 1.6), and the relation with entrepreneurs and PA. The fields treated in the table are related to the origin of

the phenomena, the main aim, how the brand is managed, the quality and intensity of know-how between the parties, and the dependence between them. Besides, we have included the main similarities between these three business models. To end with, we have decided to include another field related to show some examples of each ABM allocated in the same activity. The examples allow us to show that all of them are operating across all of Europe.

Table 1.6: Example of differences among franchising, co-operatives, and bargain centers.

	Franchising	Co-operatives	Bargaining centers
Examples (Grocery)	GROCERY OUTLET (USA), EROSKI, DIA (SPA)	CONSUM (SPA), COOP SWEDEN (SWE), CO-OPERATIVE WHOLESALE SOCIETY (CWS-UK)	SPAR (AU), MERCADONA (SPA), MAKRO (NED), SAINSBURY (UK), CARREFOUR (FRA)
Origin	During the 18th century: Singer Sewing Co., Coca-cola, Sheraton	During the industrial revolution, to fight against labor conditions at that moment in manufacturing industries. Later, it was widely developed in farming and agri-food companies.	In Spain, during the sixties by TV and radio, using small advertising agencies. In Europe, in the early nineties with grocery companies, especially in France.
Main Aim	Primary economic: to reduce transaction and agency costs and to acquire external capital and local knowledge from partners.	Non-economic: association of people united voluntarily with common needs and aspirations in economic, social and cultural matters through a jointly owned and democratically managed company	Primary economic: BC negotiate products and services with suppliers in order to achieve scale economies. The members get their raw materials for less price.
Branding	Established by the franchisor, looking for homogeneity among all outlets	It is homogeneous and established by the co-operative and shared by their members	Members adopt the BC brand but can share it with their one.
Know-how and quality issues	Coordination and knowledge shared between franchisor-franchisees is crucial for success	Shared between their members through their own experience. Co-operative establishes minimum requirements of products it sells. Members have to accomplish them.	Shared between their members through their experience. Members decide what knowledge is useful for their own company. Members must buy a minimum amount of products and are free to buy others on their own.
Dependence	Contract length used to be from 5 to 10 years. The parties are legally independent.	Co-operative is borne and organized by its members.	Parties are legally and economically independent. Members must follow some guidelines

Predominant activities	Retailing, hostelry, and restaurants	Manufacturing and food	Food and retailing
Ownership	Independent entrepreneur (franchisor), Independent entrepreneur (franchisee)	Co-operativists are members	Independent entrepreneurs (central), independent entrepreneurs (outlet).
Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Associated members have to pay some entry fee and some royalties (but the amount can vary widely) ○ Branding is distinguishable. Some brands and products identify the brand and network. ○ Members are dependent on the central (at different levels of dependence). ○ They create scale economies, and some knowledge is shared. 		

Source: Own elaboration.

For all this, it is possible to remark that these three BM have some differences and similarities among them that allow us to establish some patterns. For example, entrepreneurs who decide to join one of these three BM have to accept a reduction of their autonomy at some level. That means the creation of dependence between his or her business and the network they belong to. Second, they accept the corporative brand in return for an identical image that creates some synergies among other entrepreneurs belonging to the same group. Third, these BM share their knowledge among their associated members, although it is expected to see some differences in terms of structuration and frequency of knowledge shared. Finally, the members have to face some entry fees and royalties in many ways and with different amounts according to the BM they belong to.

ENTREPRENEURS AND FRANCHISING CHAINS.

Franchising is an attractive business model because entrepreneurs can start their companies with lower risk than IBM (Withane, 1991; Gauzente, 2002). This comparison between entrepreneurs and franchisees has received much attention from researchers. For example, the work of Withane (1991) shows us that differences exist between the franchisees' perceptions as entrepreneurs, in terms of dependency, personal behavior, entrepreneurial spirit, and governance.

Dant and Gundlach (1999) deal with the entrepreneurs' dichotomic decision to choose between autonomy and dependence. It is important to note how the franchisor-franchisee relationship must be managed. From an AT perspective, *"excessive autonomy undermines franchisors' authority, meanwhile, excessive controls and monitoring behaviors can produce agency problems reducing the trust between the parties"* (1999:36-37). Their main conclusion is franchisor-franchisee must coexist in a relationship based on confidence between them, avoiding the competences of the other party. Dealing with this topic, Dada et al. (2011) have concluded that entrepreneurial behavior is present in franchisees. The authors suggest franchising chains may act in order to manage it, doing activities in order to improve solutions available for franchise systems. Forums, meetings or franchisee congresses are sources of this behavior.

According to Gauzente (2002), one of the main reasons to choose a franchise is the security and stability of the business formula. The results shown by Guilloux et al. (2004) go in the same direction. These authors say advising and consulting issues are the most important sources of value for franchisees. Nevertheless, both decisions (to be an entrepreneur or to be franchisee) are extremely important for people. According to Kaufmann (1999), independent entrepreneurs are especially concerned about independence and control when they create their job. Meanwhile, franchisees are looking for profitability when they decide to purchase a franchise.

Another contribution is the Sardy and Alon's paper (2007). These authors compare nascent entrepreneurs and franchisees in terms of previous experience, growth objectives, motivation, and risk. According to these authors, independent entrepreneurs have more previous experience than franchisees, and they are more self-confident with their skills and abilities than franchisees. In growth terms, franchisees try to grow their outlet as large as possible, whereas entrepreneurs keep control of all business, containing growth. Finally, in terms of motivation and risk, there are no differences in terms of expected incomes, but an entrepreneur is confident with himself or herself to make the company successful.

Later, in 2013, Seawright et al. have compared three types of entrepreneurs (corporate manager, franchisee, and independent). According to this paper, results show that franchisees have a high level of commitment with the franchisor, despite having a low level of skills, similar to managers. Besides, this study showed us that the franchisee profile is more related to managers than entrepreneurs.

After considering previous literature, how do the franchising chains affect the entrepreneurial decision? After the previous revision made, we could affirm that the alliances between the entrepreneurs and franchising allow the entrepreneur to run their own business with lower risk expected but, in KIBS such as those under study in this dissertation, a lower risk is not ensured.

ENTREPRENEURS AND CO-OPERATIVES.

How does the co-operativism affect the entrepreneurial decision? Co-operativism is a voluntary membership for its members. With this BM, the main dilemma can emerge from the independence and interdependence of its members. Following Utz, the literature review “*has shown that individuals with an activated interdependent self-construal are more attentive to the (social) context in general*” (2004:178).

So the problems between entrepreneurs and co-operatives can be faced with Property Rights and Agency Theory. For example, members must have some incentives and equity among them to belong to the co-operative chains. If these aims are not accomplished, free-riding behaviors can emerge (Borgen, 2004).

ENTREPRENEURS AND BARGAIN CENTERS.

Despite the low attention paid about this variant of ABM, we can consider the BC as an alliance between entrepreneurs and a network. After all, the entrepreneurs who join a BC have some obligations to accomplish such as minimum investment on products from the central or the obligation to use management software they provide. In this sense, the BC affects the entrepreneurial decision: this alliance

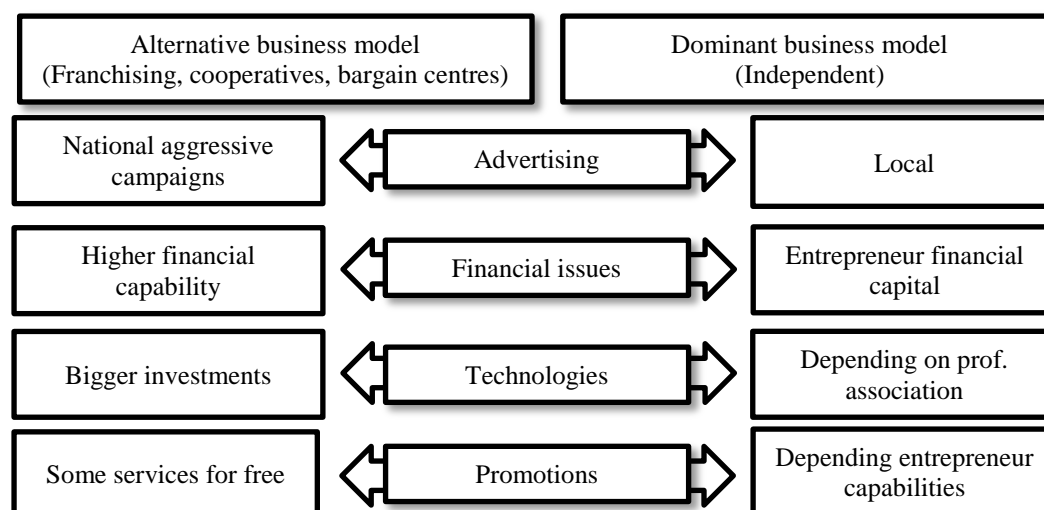
requires some levels of coordination between the parties, and as a result, some level of dependence. Although this level of dependence can be different compared to franchising or co-operatives, some similarities still exist. Given this, BC is an option for entrepreneurs who seek a soft alliance.

To sum up, after seeing all these three ABM, we believe that the link between entrepreneurs and the associated companies is the service provided by the association and the entrepreneurs' expectations. Therefore, the perfect association is the fit of expectations between entrepreneurs and networks. The parties help the other in terms of reducing the weaknesses of each party. In this sense, our three types of associations proposed in this research have established three levels of dependence and the expectations from the alliance subscribed.

1.4.2 The associated chains and professional associations.

Given the differences between PA (conservative position to protect their members and to avoid external menaces, ensuring a certain level of quality), and ABM (adding some innovation, in product, service or system), it is expected that this relationship can be quite uncomfortable (Figure 1.3). However, researchers, especially from the ABM perspective, have avoided this connection (Gruen et al., 2000).

Figure 1.3: Differences between independent and associated business models.



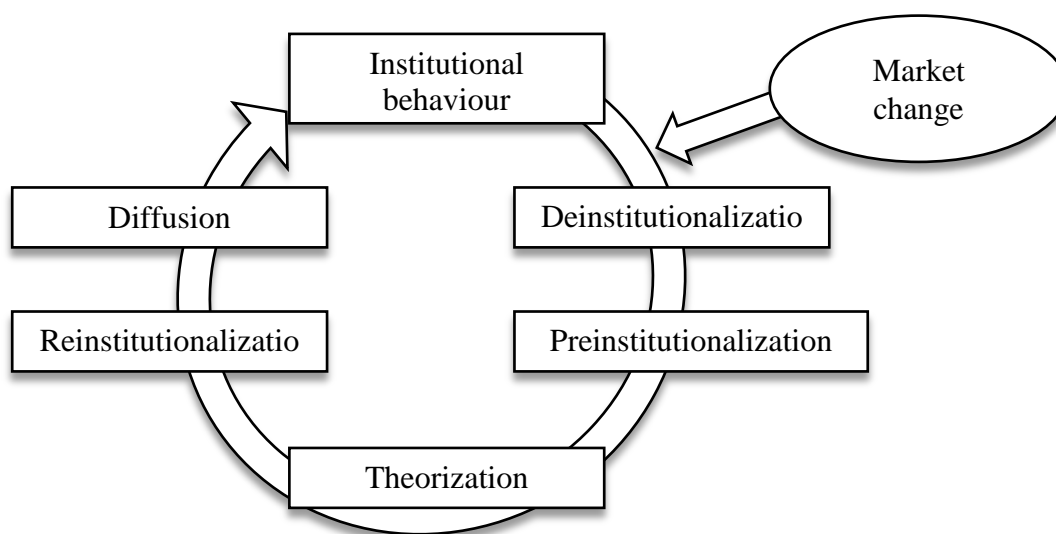
Source: Own Elaboration.

Doing a brief study of the PA web pages¹⁴, we can find some differences between the ABM and IBM. For example, in terms of advertising campaigns, ABM usually use aggressive campaigns on TV or similar. However, IBM only have enough resources to do local advertising. Financial capital is also higher in ABM than independent. Besides, innovation is quite weak in the dominant business model. According to Arruñada (1992), in order to maintain the uniformity between members and the competitiveness, PA usually reject some innovations. On the contrary, ABM usually work in order to improve the system and to find new solutions for their problems. Finally, to attract new customers, ABM creates some aggressive advertising campaigns offering new promotions and free services.

Despite these differences, the research comparing different BM is quite weak. It can be difficult to find some research papers related to the link between these organizations. Nevertheless, from Greenwood et al. (2002), the relationship between them can be articulated (figure 1.4). According to these authors, PA must change their traditional (conservative) point of view and their actions in order to maintain their performance. However, to accept these changes, PA have to pass some stages: stage one occurs when some events or actions destabilize traditional practices such as new technologies or policy changes. As a result, some entrepreneurs or companies can see business opportunities (stage two), destabilizing the previously accepted behavior. Later, stage three consists of discussing solutions to solve the new environment. Next, institutions have to carry out changes in the accepted behavior, adding the new solutions adopted. Finally, the next stages (fifth and sixth) will be the diffusion through their members and the acknowledgment of them.

¹⁴ Some professional association webpages has been checked to do the table. The results were extracted asking Valencia dentistry professional association (www.icoev.es); Optometry professional association of Region of Valencia (www.coocv.es); and Physiotherapist professional association of Valencia (www.colfisiocv.org).

Figure 1.4: Market changes and the response of institutions.



Source: Own elaboration based on Greenwood et al., 2002.

1.4.3 The entrepreneurs and professional associations.

PA were born in order to protect the interest of their members against threats and share their problems and knowledge (Arruñada, 1992; Rusaw, 1995; Greenwood et al., 2002). Authors like Rusaw (1995) argue that the utility of PA will depend on four factors.

- 1) **The technology of knowledge.** Technological knowledge is useful for a short time. The need to renew it increases the importance of the PA role.
- 2) PA try to find **homogeneity through their members**. Dissonant behaviors are punished in order to preserve the PA acquired before.
- 3) PA have **formal representation** in front of other social agents. Using these organizations, their members can find related education, business opportunities, and protection.
- 4) From a sociological point of view, the members who belong to PA can raise their knowledge using the **communication** between them, solving any problems related to the profession.

Therefore, in activities such as dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy, PA membership is mandatory¹⁵. However, although some members can take profit from the PA services, others can consider it as an expense, being PA performance under judge by members.

¹⁵ In Spain, the obligation to be in PA on these activities was written in the Law 2/1974, and expanded by the Law 44/2003, which organized the health professions.

1.5 Final remarks.

This chapter has introduced the main actors involved in this dissertation. Being KIBS small firms, these are the professional entrepreneurs self-employed, the associated business models (franchising, co-operatives and bargain centers), and the influences from professional associations (PA).

To clarify them, in this chapter, we have analyzed the actors involved in this dissertation:

- The independent BM dominates entrepreneurship in KIBS, such as dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy..
- Professional Associations (PA) mainly organizes these activities providing guidelines and recommendations.
- Despite this, other entrepreneurs have found some inefficiency related to the dominant BM and PA performance. Consequently, these entrepreneurs have created other BM using networks with other entrepreneurs.
- The networks are shaped by firms adopting different variants of the model (franchising, co-operatives, and bargain centers).

The main difference between those entrepreneurs allied with a network and those who operate isolated is the delegation of some tasks to the network. Those who have signed a contract with cooperatives, bargain centers, and franchising chains have delegated issues such as advertising, software management, or recruiting. On the contrary, those who have established their company fully independent have to bear all these issues beyond to bear those tasks related to the profession.

However, entrepreneurs joint in these ABM must assume other costs related to the network membership, entry fee, royalties, direct supervision, and others to accomplish the requirements of all parties. In reverse, IBM have to equip their clinics with all machinery and knowledge required to provide the service. Therefore, fixed costs can be higher.

Besides, the alliance (or not) with a network means a (dis-) approval to the community of practitioners and professional associations. In other words, PA usually speak about “*intrusiveness*” or “*bad practices*” in order to alleviate the

pressure of ABM and to protect traditional IBM. Therefore, the choice to opt for a BM implies some reputation costs.

After all, all BM have advantages and disadvantages, so what BM performs better? It should be considered that the performance can be different among entrepreneurs according to their profile and their motivations (Bhide, 1996). The entrepreneurial literature shows two types of entrepreneurs: Following Block and Sandner (2009:119), “*opportunity entrepreneurs are those who start their businesses in order to pursue an opportunity*,” while entrepreneurs by necessity motivated entrepreneurs are those without other options for work. Therefore, those entrepreneurs with specific training may be aligned with necessity entrepreneurs, whereas those who have signed an alliance with a network can be oriented to be opportunity entrepreneurs.

This position can create opportunities for entrepreneurs, so: are opportunity-entrepreneurs more oriented to obtain economic performance? Furthermore, are necessity-entrepreneurs (those with a professional profile related to the activity) more oriented to find non-economic performance? Is economic performance more critical compared to non-economic issues?

Besides, activities also can show differences in their performance. As was shown during the introduction of this work, some authors (Windrum and Tomlinson, 1999; Romero-Amado, 2010) agree with the existing differences among services activities, given their heterogeneity, technical innovation, or dynamism. Therefore, although the analyzed activities are very similar, some differences may arise in terms of performance.

Also, analyzing these activities isolated at the entrepreneurial level can be a big mistake. The different perspectives from already trained professionals can be very different in activities such as those under study here. For example, the job of Carraher et al. (2011) illustrates differences in performance among entrepreneurs and employees in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. These authors observed differences in these countries regarding pay satisfaction, gender, salary, age, and culture.

Given these arguments and questions, we consider our first research question and hypothesis to develop both qualitative and quantitatively:

Research question 1: *For small firms operating in KIBS, is there any better business model?*

Hypothesis 1: *In small firms operating in KIBS, the business model (independent or associated), the activity (dentistry, optometry, or physiotherapy), and the role developed by professionals (entrepreneurs or employees) are directly related to the perceived performance.*

Summarizing, this chapter has shown the most important agents involved in this dissertation and the relationship between them and the main hypotheses to test. The next chapter will review and discuss theories from which derive some proposals and hypotheses.

CHAPTER 2: INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL IN SMALL FIRMS.

2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL IN SMALL FIRMS.

Chapter 1 introduced entrepreneurs, professional associations, and network of clinics, and the relation among them. The entrepreneurs have to choose the most appropriate Business Model (BM) in order to maximize their performance. Each of them has some advantages and limitations. Whereas Independent Business Models (IBM) allows them to organize their company following their wishes and expectations, entrepreneurs must bear all entrepreneurial behavior roles. On the contrary, Associated Business Models (ABM) imply all-ready clinics, but entrepreneurs have to delegate some authority and to require coordination between entrepreneurs and their network.

In this struggling to find the most appropriate BM, Professional Associations (PA) play an essential role in KIBS. They have legitimacy, authority, and reputation from professionals. One of the main roles is to ensure certain levels of quality in the profession. Given their formal authority, the entrepreneurs' choices are constrained by environmental pressures from PA. However, the emergence of franchising chains, co-operatives, and bargain centers have provided them also some reputation and brand image. This influence was given by their aggressive advertising campaigns, brand recognition, and other actions. As a result, all these companies become institutional references.

Consequently, this dissertation uses the Institutional Theory to analyze the influence of environmental agents (professional associations and reference

companies) and their effects (coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism) on the performance.

Besides, these activities require a high investment in intellectual capital. These professionals usually complement their training with post-graduate degrees. It should be added that in most of these professions, the training investment is correlated by the need to use particular assets. Therefore, it was decided to use the Intellectual Capital Theory as the second theoretical framework to explain the different firm performance by studying the intellectual capital developed. Therefore, this chapter aims to introduce two complementary theoretical approaches used in this dissertation. With them, it is expected to analyze in-depth the environment, knowledge, and capabilities these companies and their professionals have and their effect on the performance.

The first section introduces the institutional theory (IT), starting with its origins and seminal papers. Next, the institutional sources, formality, and effects are also discussed. Finally, theoretical gaps and hypotheses development are shown. Following the same structure, the second section develops the Intellectual Capital Theory (IC). Its origins and definitions, the most common dimensions used in literature, theoretical gaps, and hypotheses development.

2.1 Institutional aspects and influences.

Chapter 1 illustrated how the professional associations (PA) play an important role in the relationship between the entrepreneur and business models in activities under their influence. Using their legitimacy in many ways, PA constrains the entrepreneurs' behavior and pushes them to those who are accepted. The authority provided by governments has given them formal legitimacy to develop their professional activity (Arruñada, 1992). As a result, the PA can be considered as institutional influence. However, the most famous and reputed companies in the PHS activities can also be a source of institutional influence (Delmas and Toffel, 2004; Lieberman and Asaba, 2006). Although their legitimation comes from markets, not from legal development.

Given these arguments, both agents (PA and recognizable companies) can be considered institutions. In this sense, this section tries to analyze how these agents execute their influence.

2.1.1 Origins of the institutional theory.

From this approach, the seminal papers were published by Meyer and Rowan (1987), DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Zucker (1987).

Although it is clear that companies are affected by their environment, the institutional theory (IT) can explain in depth how the environment is perceived. From Scott's perspective, companies establish *"a social order based fundamentally on a shared social reality which, in turn, is a human construction, being created in social interaction"* (1987:495).

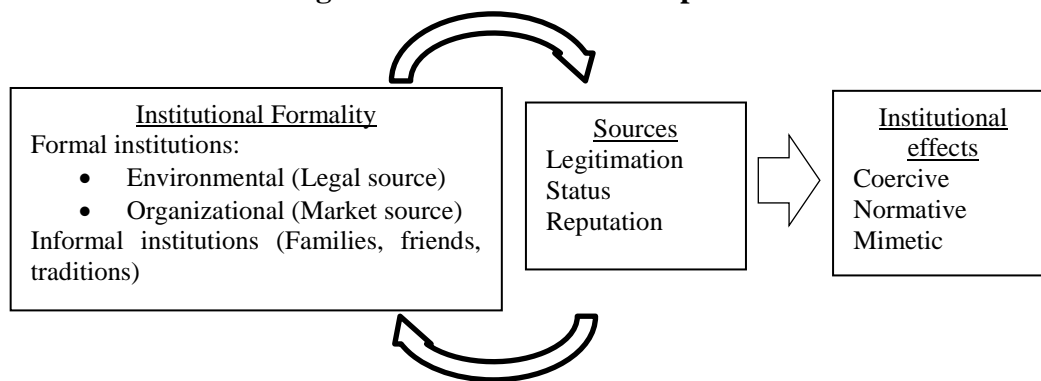
According to Scott, *"IT considers the processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines, and become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior"* (2005:462). Under IT, agents are pressured by institutions, involving other agents such as organizations, governments, or individuals formally legitimated to follow any rules or guidelines (Zucker, 1987).

According to DiMaggio and Powell, the institutionalization process emerges for four reasons (1983:148):

- To increase the interaction among organizations in the same field.
- To establish accepted structures and patterns of a coalition.
- To increase the information between the members and finally,
- To develop mutual awareness and protection mechanisms.

Therefore, institutional sources affect the companies transforming them, being more homogeneous¹⁶. The service provided by companies become more similar and, the more institutional isomorphism, the less differentiation will be on their outcomes. To analyze this process, figure 2.1 summarizes all the institutional isomorphism process.

Figure 2.1: The institutional process.



Source: Own elaboration.

2.1.2 Institutional sources.

The institutional perspective can be applied if other individuals or organizations recognize them. In KIBS, professionals provide them some legitimation, status, and reputation.

¹⁶ Isomorphism is the tendency to homogenization of the members. It can be defined as “a constraining process that forces on unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:149).

LEGITIMATION.

Meyer and Scott (1983) established that: “*Legitimacy mainly refers to the adequacy of an organization as a theory. A completely legitimate organization would be one about which no question could be raised*”.

To study the legitimation, the previous authors have developed some dimensions that must be considered. After doing a literature review, Deephouse and Schuman (2008) proposed to differentiate between two dimensions of legitimacy:

- **Professional legitimacy**, referring to professional endorsement. It is based on cognitive aspects. “*Collective authority over what is an acceptable theory*” (2008:53).
- **Normative legitimacy**, conferred by any audience, not only professionals.

STATUS.

According to Deephouse and Shuman (2008), some status variables could be prominence and prestige and may affect the legitimacy and reputation of organizations directly. Following Washington and Zajac (2005), status can be analyzed from three different perspectives:

- **The historical legacy** that means the status will tend to be perpetuated. We must note that this legacy includes a well-recognized status and bad-recognized status.
- **The positive association** that means well-recognized organizations will tend to interact with other well-recognized organizations.
- **Negative association**, referring to the relations with bad-recognized organizations to interact with other well-recognized. There will be some boundaries given their initial status.

REPUTATION.

It can be defined as “*generalized expectation about firms’ future behavior performance based on collective perceptions or past performance or behavior*”

(Deephouse and Schuman, 2008: 59). Following these authors, reputation variables include experience, training, and visibility of the brand.

After seeing these definitions, it is reasonable that the sum of them can shape the institutional effects (Figure 2.2). The institutional source can influence the way that organizations execute their institutional power. For instance, it is more usual that public organizations create rules and norms (power based on legitimation), whereas their competitors imitate market leaders (power based on reputation).

Figure 2.2: The institutional sources.

$\text{Legitimation} + \text{status} + \text{reputation} = \text{Institutional effects}$
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Source: Own elaboration.

2.1.3 Institutional formality.

THE FORMAL INSTITUTIONS.

Following Mayer and Rowan (1977:340-41), formal institutions are: “*systems of coordinated and controlled activities that arise when work is embedded in complex networks of technical relations and boundary-spanning exchanges (...). These institutions pray to maintain ceremonial conformity from the environmental uncertainties.*”

To analyze the formal institutions, there are two separate theoretical approaches (Zucker, 1987: 1) the **environment as an institution** and 2) **the organizations as institutions**. From the one side, *the environment as an institution* can be found when the state creates these agents in order to coordinate the activity in some professions. The aims of these organizations use to protect the rules created by the society. As a result, the environment and behaviors are more predictable, and the long-run survival increase. In contrast, it can appear some inefficiency due to uniformity activity among members. Examples of these institutions are schools, hospitals, professional associations, regulatory commissions, or trade unions. On the other side, *the organizations as institutions* emerge when some agents

influence other agents creating routines or technologies used by the agents, reducing their costs, making the agents more efficient. Examples of this type of institution are leader companies.

In order to evaluate its institutional influences, researchers have focused in three dimensions (Meyer and Rowan, 1977): a) the environmental institutions, b) the organizations, and c) the internal organizational structure. For our research, we are going to focus on the influence provided by the environment and other organizations. Given the expected knowledge required on the companies under study, we decided to analyze the internal organizational structure from the intellectual capital theory.

The environmental institutions.

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977:343), environmental institutions are: *“positions, policies, programs, and procedures of modern organizations enforced by public opinion, by the views of important constituents, by knowledge legitimated through the educational system, by social prestige, by the laws, and by the definitions of negligence and prudence used by the courts”*. Besides, following DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the organizations created in this way participate actively in institutional life.

In KIBS, one of the most important environmental institutions is the Professional Associations (PA). In Spain, these professionals have to join their respective PA to perform the activity¹⁷, giving them formal legitimation from public authorities. To evaluate the influence provided by the institutions in our research sectors, we have to study three PA and their influence on their members and society (Table 2.1).

In this table, the three PA are supported by their respective legal development. The regional governments create laws in order to give them formal legitimacy.

¹⁷ According to Sixth Final Provision of Law 3/2014. Amendment of Art. 4.8a, of Law 44/2003 of 21 November, regulating health professions in Spain.

Besides, all of them offer specific courses and seminars to retrain and update their members' knowledge.

Table 2.1: Professional association's profiles in Community of Valencia (2015).

Services-Characteristics	Dentistry	Optometry	Physiotherapy
Formal Legitimacy	Law 2/2000, March 31st, by Generalitat Valenciana	Law 2/2007, February 5th, by Generalitat Valenciana	Law 1/2000 March 30th by Generalitat Valenciana.
Created in (year)	2000	2007	2000
Professional Association is... (Goals)	Do not appear. Tacitly, they pay special attention to their potential threats to their business models and status	A tool to show the population the values, ethics, and professional commitment of their members. Is created to serve the community. The profession is above personal and economic benefit.	Defense and representation tool, providing better health care to the population.
Ethical code	YES	YES	YES
Vacancy advertisement	YES	YES	YES
Judicial proceedings (2015)	4 Court cases, 5 favorable judgments, 1 expedient, 8 Complaints, 83 Claims	Doesn't appear	Application form available
Governance education level required	Professional studies (Doctors)	Heterogeneous profiles	Professional studies (Doctors and graduated
Top Management Team	Professional dentists	Two commercial agents and professional optometrists	Professional physiotherapists
Members' services	Retraining Conferences Consulting Insurance Sanitary authorization Retirement Library Grants	Consulting Insurance Library	Insurance Consulting Library
Relations with Customers and citizens	None. All information goes from members to members.	Some interactive tools are available	They have a list of their clinics and an exclusive tap in their webpage
Relations with their members	Circular letters Professional Journal	Press office Citizen information board. Blog	Blog
Position	Extremely Defensive. Their publications, complaints are usually against intrusism and policy demands, in order to protect their members	Conciliatory position. The association's speech aims to go to link professionals and society.	Defensive

Source: Own elaboration from websites, sector reports, and legal development.

Nevertheless, differences among them appear when they define their main aims. Two of them (Dentistry and Physiotherapist) show an attitude oriented to defend their profession from threats. It seems that punishment actions are most common (complaints, claims, court cases, expedients). Meanwhile, Optometry's PA tends to show the value and commitment of their members and manage their organization as a meeting point. These differences could be motivated for many reasons. Optometry is the only one with professional managers (not optometrists) in its top management team, and they try to be in contact with society through blogs and boards. On the other side, the Dentistry Association act for and to dentist members. Its actions to protect them are wide, from coercive actions until retirement programs. Nevertheless, dentists usually publish their journal, but it is focused on retraining and acquiring new knowledge. In the middle between them is the Physiotherapist Association. They have a board exclusive to inform customers and society in general.

To sum up, all PA tend to defend their members. The differences exist in how they do it. It seems that Dentistry PA uses an extreme punishment power, defending the profession and status. More relaxed, but still being a defensive attitude, Physiotherapist PA uses a defensive speech, but they are establishing some relations with customers and environments. Meanwhile, Optometry does not seem to use punishment power in their goals, and the relations between the PA and his environment are more relaxed.

In this research, however, not only environmental institutions (PA as legal legitimacy) affect companies. Although PA plays an important role in these sectors, entrepreneurs can also be influenced by other agents. These are organizational institutions.

The organizational institutions.

The influence produced by these agents is not the same as the previous one (Zucker, 1987). The first difference emerges through innovation and organizational reputation. The organizational influence exists when a company imitates other companies, increasing the survival rate. Second, through increasing

the relationship between companies, in terms of employees, location, or knowledge shared.

Table 2.2 is an example of the biggest dental companies operating in Spain. Professional administrators manage them instead of professional members. The most relevant issues are related to financial tools, aggressive advertising, and the size of the net.

Table 2.2: Market changes after the appearing of dental companies.

Company	Dentix	Vitaldent	Milenium dental
Created in	2010	1997	2009
Business Model	Organic Growth/Alliances	Franchising	Sanitas' Spin-off
Nº outlets	137	354	171
Resources aspects	Scale economics (inputs cheaper)	Scale economics (inputs cheaper)	Contracts with general insurance companies
Location	Some outlets are placed in malls. Presence in South-America	Presence in Europe	n/a
Financial issues	Interest-free financing	Financing treatment available	24/12 months Interest-free financing
Technologies	CAM-CAD TAC 3D	n/a	n/a
Offers and promotions	Mouth reviews, Mouth scans are free	Free mouth cleaning	Special offers in some treatments. Free mouth cleaning.

Source: Companies websites, SABI and ALIMARKET databases.

To sum up, given these two sources of influence, we can expect that their actions will be different. On the one hand, PA press entrepreneurs with formal legitimacy. Usually, they try to maintain the social status of their members, helping them with other activities related or not to the profession, offering formation and some advantages, defending, or advising them from threats. On the other hand, leading companies are looking for new market opportunities, promoting them with their technology, offering financial facilities for their customers, using advertising campaigns, or developing other competencies different than those developed on the PA.

Nevertheless, both kinds of influences (environmental and organizational) are in the relation between them, but the main question emerges from this theory: Which of them is the predominant one? Both types of influence exist in the same

environment. If an entrepreneur wants to compete in a market, he must bind some legal rules¹⁸. Besides, the entrepreneur must follow some rules established by other agents. For example, in the case of restaurants, they have to open, especially during holiday days and weekends (social rule). Moreover, organizational influences across competitors or leading companies must be considered.

An example of it is the ceramic tile cluster of Castellón, the firm Porcelanosa is the leader operating in this cluster, but if this company develops new technologies, environmental companies force themselves in order maintain their competitiveness (Hervás-Oliver et al., 2017).

According to previous examples, we can say environmental institutions push to maintain the business as they know, doing little steps in changes or technology. In reverse, organizational institutions are seeking changes in order to find Schumpeterian rents or to maintain or acquire a sustainable competitive advantage.

It is easy to expect that the most important institutional influence comes from environmental institutions due to their formal and legal support, but according to Zucker (1987), the strongest institutional response comes from the private sector. That means companies pay more attention to their competitive environment than the legal influences. In franchising activities, Barthélemy (2011) confirmed that franchisors tend to increase their reliance on franchising when their successful competitors have a high proportion of franchised outlets.

Related to this topic, some questions emerge: What is the point of view of professionals in KIBS such as dentistry, optometry, or physiotherapy? They are obliged to join PA but, what kind of influence from reference companies do they receive? Are there any differences in their perceptions if they belong or not to a network? What are their perceptions related to the perceived performance?

¹⁸ For example, self-employment fee, taxes, opening hours or labour rules are influences of the environment organizations. Professional habits can be as well, but usually these are provided by professional associations, guilds or trade-unions.

THE INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS.

Actors do not behave as entirely rationally. Following Simon (1979), theories such as Statistical Decision Theory or Game Theory demonstrated that all decision processes must assume a risk proportion. To face such uncertainty, all entrepreneurs take some decisions influenced by cultural and cognitive explanations, interests, or other hidden reasons (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Following these motivations, companies move mimetically as a response to uncertainty (Selznick, 1996). However, formal institutions are a small part of the influence. Following Díaz-Casero et al., (2005) it exists some influences provided by informal institutions that may affect the entrepreneurial intentions. Examples are the job position, policies, leisure trends and religion, family, social relations, behavior codes, and conventions that mostly define their behavior. The more visible forces are the family, neighbors, and colleagues.

- **Families:** Maybe this is the most powerful informal institution¹⁹. It would be almost impossible to explain how families affect the business. It exists in a research field dedicated to studying the influence of families in businesses. As a curiosity, some of the biggest companies in the world are *Wal-Mart*, *Samsung*, or *Koch Industries*²⁰.
- **Neighborhood:** If families are the most powerful institution, neighbors could be the second one, if we treat them as social and cultural influences. It includes some trends, such as unregistered economies or organizational population ecologies (Reynolds, 1991).
- **Colleagues:** Chell and Baines established the trading contacts as a source of environmental information. In their study, although there are some other sources of information, colleagues represent 37% of an information source for business owners (2000:201).

Given the relevance of them, the analysis of employees is an informal source of power in KIBS. In this sense, Tolbert and Zucker consider some sources related to employees as an institutional source such as “*quality circles, employees’ assistance programs, telecommuting policies, and so forth*” (1999:185). Besides, employees can illustrate a different point of view from business owners and

¹⁹ Being an institutional source, the impact of the family in entrepreneurial behaviour is clear. An example of it, the Journal of Small Business Management released a Special Issue in 2017 related to entrepreneurial research on family firms:

(<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/1540627x/2017/55/4>).

²⁰ Source: www.multinationalfamilybusiness.com

entrepreneurs. The employees' perspective can be interesting in order to fully understand the institutional influence perceived in activities placed on KIBS.

In the case of dentistry, physiotherapy, or optometry, employees are starting to be more important, given a growing population of professionals hired. Therefore, this thesis tries to analyze not only the entrepreneurs' point of view, also employees'.

2.1.4 Institutional effects.

The previous sections have established how institutional influences are generated. They were born due to legitimation, status, and provided by governments, society, or markets. Later, the influence can be analyzed according to who provides them with these powers. If governments gave the authority, it could be considered environmental institutions such as professional associations or trade unions. On the contrary, organizational institutions are those markets gave enough power to influence other agents.

The institutional influence can be executed from three isomorphism ways. These are coercive, the mimetic, and the normative isomorphism. To clarify them, mechanisms related are shown in the following table:

Table 2.3: Institutional influence types and mechanisms related.

Isomorphism	Mechanism-related
COERCIVE ISOMORPHISM	✓ Coercive regulation.
	✓ Governmental Authorization.
	✓ Rewarding behaviors.
	✓ Public policies
	✓ Customers' behavior
	✓ Pressures from groups of interest.
MIMETIC ISOMORPHISM	✓ Strategic interest.
	✓ Innovation and process improvement.
	✓ Reduce problems and expenses.
	✓ Imitation
NORMATIVE ISOMORPHISM	✓ Access to resources.
	✓ Increase relations with the public sector.
	✓ Integration with social networks.
	✓ Social prestige

Source: Own elaboration based on DiMaggio and Powell, 1983 and Díez-de-Castro et al., 2015.

COERCIVE ISOMORPHISM.

According to DiMaggio and Powell, coercive isomorphism “*results from both formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations functions*” (1983:150). There are two main examples to illustrate the coercive pressures. The first is **legal development**, and the second is conferring **legitimacy to other agents**. Following Díez-De-Castro et al. (2015), legal development is a tool to apply in companies to avoid irresponsible actions. Related to the legitimation of other agents, these agents use some levels of certifications to recognize that their members act under the consent of the institutions. Examples are universities, professional associations or trade unions.

Coercive pressures exist positively through rewards or public helps, although it is more recognizable from punishments (negative way). As a result, this guidance is accepted by society, creating some level of homogeneity. If individuals neglect the approved behavior, they can be avoided by their environment (Díez-de-Castro et al., 2015).

Coercive influence can also appear from informal institutions as well, such as neighbors, friends, customers, or family. The main characteristic of the coercive power is the sanctions from institutions. If the group of pressure considers some behaviors of their members as inadequate, the coercive power will be executed in the form of fines or isolation, or bad reputation (Díez-de-Castro et al., 2015).

MIMETIC ISOMORPHISM.

This isomorphism emerges because all companies compete under limited information. Markets are not perfect, and companies work with some level of uncertainty. Therefore, companies imitate others for no reason, just in order to protect the company against ignorance. As a result, uncertainty encourages mimetism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The mimetic process can be done with employees' turnover among clinics. As a result, it can create some levels of innovation and system improvements, or even acquire the experience and knowledge (Díez-De-Castro et al., 2015). Following DiMaggio and Powell (1983), ambiguous goals of organizations, lack of alternatives and the importance of technologies are sources of mimetic pressures. Besides, management tools such as brainstorming or quality circles are examples of mimetism. As a result, such isomorphism pressures companies to be more homogenous.

NORMATIVE ISOMORPHISM.

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), normative pressures are related to the professionals or a particular occupation that define some appropriate ways to act. It includes cultural behaviors. In this sense, the members show homogeneous traits and characteristics, achieving some level of legitimation (Johnston, 2013:40).

Two aspects are important to develop normative isomorphism. From one side, the education and legitimation. On the other side, the elaboration of professional networks. (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). These authors pointed out that the transfer of employees between companies is also a source of normative isomorphism (not only mimetic), and continue saying that the reliance on academic credentials and the participation of organizational managers in trade unions and PA are also sources of normative pressures. Besides, Díez-De-Castro et al. (2015) added that these employees' turnover allows access to resources. Other influences providing some normative pressures are social prestige from other professionals or to increase relations with the public sector. As a result, companies must assume some normative pressures "*to ensure resources and support from stakeholders and society*" (Bruton et al., 2010:427)".

2.1.5 Theoretical gaps.

There is a narrow connection between IT and entrepreneurship. For example, Alvarez et al. (2017) studied the environmental conditions to promote female

entrepreneurship. Their results show that informal environmental pressures (Entrepreneurial skills, social network, and family) are more relevant than formal pressures (financial access tools, training, and non-economic grants).

Another field related is entrepreneurial ecosystems. The institutions play an important role in the entrepreneurial possibilities. For example, using a biological jargon, McMullen (2018) discusses the impact of environmental agents on companies. Another example is the paper published by Sperber and Linder (2018) who shows that males and females perceive the entrepreneurial ecosystem support differently.

After seeing these two types of institutional influences (environmental and organizational influences) with the main effects of this theory (coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism); it is our aim to contrast the effect of the environmental pressures on KIBS and entrepreneurs.

These companies receive strong pressures from PA, given their legitimacy. Besides, employees have also a lot of bargaining power given their specialized training and experience. Besides, ABM have enough power to influence independent small firms. Given all these features, the institutional theory provides a good framework to analyze the impact of these environmental sources in this kind of clinics.

Therefore, many questions have emerged: ¿Does the BM affect the perception of institutional influences? How the environmental and organizational institutions affect the professionals? Besides, in terms of KIBS performance, which BM takes more profit from the institutions? All these questions can be summarized in the following research question:

<p>Research Question 2: <i>For entrepreneurs operating in KIBS, how does the business model affect the perception of institutional influences?</i></p>

With this, given the differences in entrepreneurial motivations, by opportunity and necessity (GEM, 2018) and the different types of entrepreneurs (Chell and Baines, 2000; Khelil, 2016), it is feasible to see differences in the perception of institutional influences on each BM. On the one hand, traditional entrepreneurs' profiles may follow intensively institutional organizations (PA), whereas new entrepreneurial can be more aware of organizational institutions (Market pressures). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *In small firms operating in KIBS, pressures from environmental and organizational institutions directly influence the business model configuration.*

Finally, a question emerges: Do the perception of institutional influences provides better performance? Some publications from Pereira-Moliner et al. (2012) or López-Gamero (2010) are examples of the connection between these concepts. Organizations may gain better levels of performance following some institutions and their prescriptions (Heugens and Lander, 2009), generating positive social recognitions (Deephhouse and Suchman, 2008). However, not everything is clear. Other authors (e.g., Heugens and Lander) consider that institutions may not affect profits or market value. Some arguments these authors consider are the presence of opportunity costs, conflicts at the organizational level and homogeneity of competitors (2009:64). Given this debate, this work tries to contribute to the present debate. For this reason, the following hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 3: *In small firms operating in KIBS, pressures from environmental and organizational institutions are directly associated with the perceived performance.*

2.2 Intellectual capital and components.

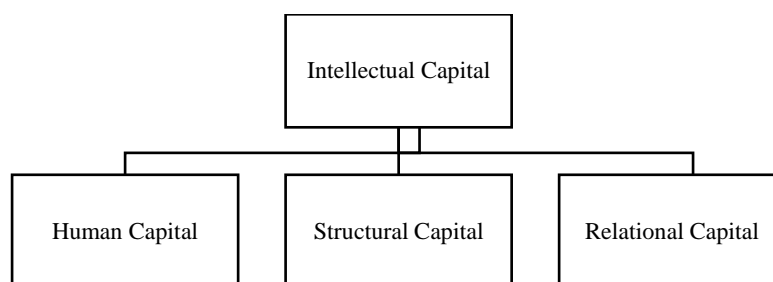
The internal organizational structure of clinics was analyzed from the Intellectual Capital (IC) perspective. This decision was taken given the especial importance of knowledge required to perform these activities.

The IC was explored as a relevant theoretical framework in the ends of the nineties, especially after the publication of many interesting works (e.g.: Kaplan and Norton, 1992; Edvinsson and Malone, 1997; Sveiby, 1997; Petty and Guthrie, 2000; Bontis, 2001).

2.2.1 Definition and elements.

Nowadays, IC is present in economic, managerial, technological, and sociological studies, especially after the revolution in information technology, the importance of knowledge-based economies, or the innovations as a competitive source (Petty and Guthrie, 2000).

Figure 2.3: Intellectual capital theory and its elements.



Source: Watson and Stanworth, 2006.

Stewart and Ruckdeschel considered IC includes “*the talents and skills of individuals and groups, technological and social networks, and the software and culture that connect them*” (1998:1). For Ordóñez de Pablos, IC represents “*the stock of knowledge that exists in an organization at a particular point in time (...), involving all knowledge based-resources that create value but are not included in the financial accounts*” (2004: 636).

Empirical research has extended the definition, including structural, customer, and human capital (Bontis, 1998). The concept of customer's capital has changed onto relational capital. (e.g., Edvinsson and Malone, 1997; Sveiby, 1997; Watson and Stanworth, 2006). Therefore, some consensus exists among researchers to divide the IC on three dimensions, being human, structural and relational (Figure 2.3).

The main authors considered that the primary concern was how to refine the IC relevance. Many definitions of the concepts were published, with many methods to measure as well (Petty and Guthrie, 2000). Nevertheless, in the third stage, the main question of this theory keeps unsolved: How can we apply IC to the companies? (Dumay, 2013). One of the biggest challenges in IC is to express the value of companies' intangible assets in their accounting books (Stewart and Ruckdeschel, 1998). This challenge is important because intangible resources can be sources of competitive advantage, but in reverse, they are less identifiable and quantifiable (Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004).

One of the most important constraints of this approach, is related to the complexity to be measured. As a result, many methods were developed. The paper of Bontis (2001) illustrates some of them:

- **Skandia Navigator** (Edvinsson and Malone, 1997): There are five areas of focus (Financial, customer, process, human capital, development, and renewal).
- **IC-index**: Is very much context-specific and is limited in this universality among companies.
- **Technology broker**: Measuring the IC from the market, intellectual, property, infrastructure, and human assets.
- **Intangible asset monitor (IAM)**: Measures IC in Competences, Internal and External Structure through growth/ renewal, efficiency, and stability of the organization.
- **Economic value added (EVA)**: Measures capital budgeting, financial planning, goal setting, performance measurement, shareholder communication, and incentive compensation.
- **Citation-weighted patents**: Using patents as a proxy for IC measurement. It includes the definition of the role of knowledge in business, competition strategies, knowledge assets, and the company's portfolio of them. It consists of evaluating the assets to keep, sell or abandon, investing gaps and assembling a new portfolio of knowledge assets.

Although all these measurements are highly accurate and manage a huge amount of items, they are oriented to evaluate IC of big companies with large developed accounting systems. In this sense, it is a challenge to establish some items easy to analyze without accounting data (Dumay, 2013). This dissertation approaches the IC measurement especially for those companies which are difficult to apply the cited measurement systems. PHS companies are some of them given the small size they usually have.

Another argument that this dissertation focuses is the IC comparison between different BM where the knowledge is crucial. After doing a small literature review, the IC journals are focused on analyzing the IC subdivisions and how to measure the IC value. Not without evaluating the contribution of those papers, the relation between IC and BM have been underestimated. The paper of Bini et al. (2016) confirms these thoughts: Although researchers have been concerned about the study of IC dimensions, the use of BM can shed some light on how these dimensions play in the company. In other words, *“thanks to BM intangible resources can be presented in action, showing their contribution to value creation”* (2016:86).

An exception was given by Liang et al. (2013). These authors compared original equipment manufacturers versus original brand manufacturers in China in terms of value-creating activities. The study found differences, especially in terms of knowledge acquisition, according to their BM.

2.2.2 Human capital management (HC).

The human capital has received attention since the beginnings of the economy as a research field. It can be defined as *“skills, experiences, attitudes, ideas, values, and competencies of the people in the firm”* (Watson and Stanworth, 2006:339). Peña says HC is *“the accumulation of personal attributes that allow humans being to function”* (2002:184); Bontis and Fitz-end consider that *“it embodies knowledge, talent, and experience of employees”* (2002:225). According to Peña (2002), some important variables related to HC are education level, business experience, and motivation. Besides, other authors consider also employee's

knowledge, innovativeness, satisfaction degree, and employee turnover rates are indicators related to HC (Sveiby, 1997; Tai and Chen, 2009; Zarandi et al., 2012).

The management of HC in these services is important due to the intensification of constant changes in the market or technological issues that make tangible assets less relevant to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Rodríguez-Pérez and Ordóñez de Pablos, 2003). For this reason, the knowledge stored in people (This means, human capital) is one key success factor for companies (Kühn et al., 2016). However, it exists some problems related to knowledge transfer, especially in this dimension. First, all knowledge cannot be codified. That means it exists difficulties and barriers to sharing knowledge (Haldin-Herrgard, 2000; Cumberland and Githens, 2012; Okoroafor, 2014). Second, whether the information is encoded or not, it represents a problem for the company. If it is encoded, although is easier to share between the members, it is also easier to take outside the company. In reverse, if it is not encoded, it is more difficult to transfer outside, unless key people decide to leave the company (Olander, 2015).

2.2.3 Structural capital (SC).

The second dimension related to the intellectual capital tackles with the structural capital. It refers to the processes or infrastructures, owned by the organization that supports HC (Watson and Stanworth, 2006), and *“represents the codified knowledge bases that do not exist within the minds of employees”* (Bontis and Fitz-End, 2002:225). According to this concept, Mrinalini and Nath say, *“the organization can survive with physical resource-based but, in a long the long run, the organization must switch over to human resource-based services”* (2000:178).

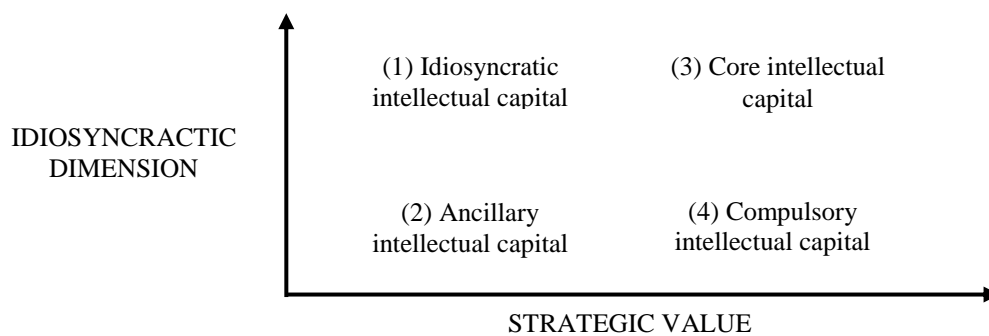
The SC is divided into two sub-elements²¹ (Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004; Watson and Stanworth, 2006). Firstly, **systems capital** includes knowledge databases, operation manuals, or mailing lists. Secondly, **innovational capital** refers to corporate culture, trust, incentives or communication channels. Another

²¹ Although we take definitions provided by Watson & Stanworth, (2006), some authors such as Ordoñez de Pablos (2004) defines SC as organizational capital (innovational capital) and technological capital (Systems capitals).

classification of SC says that the components of SC are trademarks, operation processes, information systems and corporate culture (Tai and Chen, 2009; Zarandi et al., 2012). In addition, Peña (2002) accepted age, financial resources and entrepreneur teams as an indicator of survival rate

However, not all SC is important. Following Ordóñez de Pablo (2004), the SC can consider ancillary, core, compulsory or idiosyncratic (Figure 2.4). The idiosyncratic dimension refers to the aspects non-necessary source of competitive advantage but can make differences from one company to its competitors. The strategic value dimension refers to the usefulness of SC. According to this author, we can have a 2 x 2 matrix.

Figure 2.4: Intellectual capital value matrix.



Source: Ordóñez de Pablos, 2004.

In cell 1, there is the IC with high idiosyncratic dimension, but without strategic value. Examples are routines or culture that does not add any value to the company but define the essence of it. Cell number 3 is the most important. All strategic IC value linked to idiosyncratic value is a source of sustainable competitive advantage, because it makes differences from the company to competitors, and therefore, represents long-term strategic value. On the contrary, cell 2 represents the minimum value of the IC to perform the activity. It is common in the industry, and it does not offer an advantage in front of competitors. Lastly, cell 4 represents IC easy to obtain by competitors, but it is strategically important for short-term, in order to find new opportunities or knowledge.

One example of structural capital is the accessibility to infrastructures. Barzotto et al. (2016) made a review of the most important factors to find structural capital in the territories. According to these authors, companies can find the workforce pool, relations between suppliers and final customers, education, and formation required and research centers, public and private benefits, and investors.

2.2.4 Relational capital as marketing actions (RC).

The third dimension of the IC is Relational Capital (RC). This dimension has been widely explored. The article published by Hosseini et al. (2016) did a good revision of many RC items and concepts related to.

RC has been studied from many perspectives and theories. Mainly, RC has been analyzed by knowledge and clustering theories. Using these and others, some considerations in order to protect the RC exist. This dimension is considered a value: companies must protect them against opportunistic behaviors.

Bontis considers RC as *“knowledge of market channels, customer and supplier relationships, as well as a sound understanding of government or industry association impacts, is the main theme of relational capital”* (1999:448). Nevertheless, this definition avoids some RC measurements, analyzing only the external and environmental agents²². Besides, Bianchi-Martini et al. added that RC *“can be considered as the result of human resource activities oriented towards building and managing the relationship between a company and its external environment”* (2016: 188).

According to Peña (2002), RC indicators are location, industry sector, and policies to encourage new business creation. Researchers from Meritum project consider that RC includes a corporate image, customer loyalty and satisfaction, the intensity of relations with suppliers, and customers and financial capacity (2002:11). However, the research published by Tai and Chen (2009) appoints this

²² For example, the work of Kale et al. (2000) analyses the RC on strategic alliances. This study deepens the relation between two parties dependent one each other. This is not our case. The parties involved in our research can develop their activity on their own although they sign alliances with other companies or associations.

field as “customer capital.” In this issue, some components related are market share, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and customer relationship. Another contribution was provided by Bianchi-Martini et al. (2016). These authors found that RC is related to revenues, net operating cash flow, and capital expenditures, although the authors did not find a relation between RC and the company’s value.

To test the RC in SME companies, Dewhurst and Cegarra-Navarro (2004) studied the optometry business. These authors consider the external communities as a learning source and the comprehension of market orientation as a key success factor for the company.

2.2.5 Theoretical gaps.

KIBS such as dentistry, optometry, or physiotherapy do not feed only with knowledge from their environment (formal and informal institutions) because it is highly based on their specialized training and prior experience. In this sense, knowledge management theories become crucial to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each BM. The management and exploitation of IC in these companies may affect the competitiveness of them through their investment in new skills, knowledge or capabilities, or to be able to differentiate from other competitors.

For these reasons, it feasible to believe there is a link between the BM and the IC dimensions, and their performance. The work published by Bontis et al. (2018) is a good example: these authors study social co-operatives in Italy. The paper shows that graduate employees positively affect economic performance, but the investment in training is negative given the cost of it. Another example is a paper published by Sardo and Serrasqueiro (2018). These authors analyze the IC and growth opportunities for financial performance. Their results show that efficient IC management allows companies to obtain good financial performance.

After seeing these examples, the importance of IC on these services and the growing situation can influence the BM choice (Ujwary-Gil, 2017). It is reasonable to believe that the stock of human and relational capital may affect the

BM: higher levels of HC (experience, prior retraining, etc.) may be oriented to establish IBM, whereas a higher volume of relations with other professionals can be associated to the ABM. So, the research question and hypothesis related to IC theory is raised as:

Research question 3: *For entrepreneurs operating in KIBS, how does the business model influence intellectual capital investment and management?*

Hypothesis 4: *In small firms operating in KIBS, the human and relational capitals directly influence the business model configuration.*

Besides, IC may be linked for better performance. For example, Claver-Cortés et al. (2018) used a grounded theory research method to analyze the shrimp industry in Ecuador under IC perspective. More related to our topic, Chiucchi et al. (2018) analyze the gender diversity on SME companies under IC perspective. Their results show that gender diversity ownership is negatively related to IC performance.

In KIBS, HC development is linked to remaining the best employees (Desousa and Awazu, 2006; Lai et al., 2017). However, other authors (e.g.: McDermot and Boyd, 2018) saw a negative relation between HC investment and employees' satisfaction when firms belong to associated chains. Related to RC, some authors (Bosma et al., 2004; Welbourne and Pardo-del-Val, 2009) saw a narrow connection with SME's perceived performance. Therefore, although there are some exceptions, it is feasible to believe that IC dimensions are related to obtaining a better performance. So, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 5: *In small firms operating in KIBS, human and relational capitals are positively associated with the perceived performance.*

2.3 Final remarks.

This chapter has focused on analyzing the two main perspectives used to analyze the links among business models (BM) and performance in KIBS: the institutional theory (IT) and intellectual capital (IC). The choice of both theories was given the characteristics of entrepreneurs operating on KIBS that create their own workplace. Whereas the IT is a good approach to analyze their environment, IC perspective is a good framework to evaluate the knowledge, processes or relations in the company. Besides, the tiny size of companies understudy here represents a remarkable opportunity to apply both theories in such small companies (Mertins et al., 2006), contributing to firms' performance (Oparaocha, 2013; Sardo et al., 2018).

From the one side, IT has the objective to check if BM, activities, and professionals are more sensitive to institutional pressures than others in terms of coercive, mimetic, and normative influence. Besides, each isomorphism has its origin on different organizations, such as legal development, public organizations, or market influences.

From the other side, the IC perspective was proposed to analyze non-tangible assets perceived in KIBS. This theory allows knowing better skills, abilities, and competencies from workers and entrepreneurs (HC), the all-tangible resources that provide the knowledge to the company (SC), and the relations with other agents (RC).

Previous lines of this dissertation have studied the research problem, the parties involved, and theoretical approaches used to deal with it. The next chapter will discuss how the research was designed, using a mix-methodology qualitative-quantitative.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

Previous chapters introduced the relations among entrepreneurs, business models, and professional associations) and the theoretical framework involved in this dissertation (institutional environment and intellectual capital theories). The present one develops the methodology scheme designed. According to our sample (small firms) characteristics and the number of cases, it has been considered a mixed methodology research design as the best option (Molina-Azorin, 2012). Under this research strategy, the analysis will combine the variables and techniques of the qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In this thesis, case-studies will be used joint to qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) and non-parametric analysis.

The first section presents the qualitative research design. To do this, we followed the guidelines proposed by Yin (2008), Flick (2004), Miles and Huberman (2004), and Saunders and Lewis (2009). The qualitative research's main objective is to fully understand the organization of the professions under study, their routines, feelings, and perceptions of these professionals. The second section illustrates the quantitative research design, including the questionnaire, statistical techniques implemented, and variables' operationalization. Finally, the third section develops the QCA technique. It is based on comparative configurations and identifies those combinations of conditions that lead to a specific result or absence (Rigoux and Ragin, 2008). Therefore, it allows for finding some patterns of interest. In the case of this dissertation, these are the configuration of the business model (independent or associated) and the presence or absence of superior performance.

3.1 Quantitative research design

The qualitative-quantitative methodology design is supported by Lee and Lings (2008) or Binda and Balbastre-Benavent (2013), who consider “*the qualitative-quantitative strategy allows collecting enough information to be later tested by quantitative research.*” Besides, this sequence consists of “*an exploratory study in the qualitative design in order to develop hypotheses to be tested on a later quantitative study*” (2013:185). Following this design, the next table summarizes the main issues from both methodologies:

Table 3.1: Dissertation research methodology.

Issue	First section (qualitative)	Second section (quantitative)
Philosophy	Interpretivism	Realism
Approach	Deductive	Deductive
Strategy	Case study	Survey
Techniques/ procedures	Interviews with script (open questions) + observation + open questions from questionnaire + relevant news related.	Questionnaire
Time horizon	Cross-sectional (during 2017)	

Source: Own elaboration based on Saunders and Lewis. (2009).

This type of analysis started from an interpretivist research philosophy. Although findings related can be substantially subjective, it allows understanding the feelings related to the case better than any other philosophy research (Saunders and Lewis, 2009). Given this, it justifies the use of a deductive approach to confirm or not the preview literature.

Under the premises established by the research questions, qualitative research was designed. According to Rynes and Gephart (2004), this methodology will allow:

- To **describe the reality** from the cases' points of view.
- To **understand how, why, when, and where** of the questions that have been raised, not only by drawing conclusions based on statistical data. We will also have at our disposal other viewpoints beyond verbal communication.
- To observe the **application of theories** in the phenomena studied.

Also, this study will have an interpretive approach, because it is characterized by analyzing the situations in which the subjects are exposed, seeking details of influence from their behaviors (Saunders and Lewis, 2009).

However, qualitative research strategy has some disadvantages (Bryman, 1988). Some of the most important are compiled in the following table, with the designed mechanism used in this dissertation to reduce them:

Table 3.2: Qualitative disadvantages and mechanisms to solve them.

Qualitative disadvantages	How this dissertation solves the problem
<i>“This is qualitative research, so the research methodology, and especially in the case study, is largely unstructured, so there is more than a real possibility to go back on the process to confirm some relevant facts research.”</i>	The iterative process is a very common piece in qualitative research. However, a research protocol was developed (Appendix I), trying to keep the uniformity through all the research process, reducing the improvisation and going back the less as possible.
<i>“The scope of the findings is not easy to replicate, so they tend to lose support in relation to empirical quantitative research court.”</i>	To reduce this bias, this study involves all businesses located in one specific country and with the same level of knowledge requirements. That means that similar social, economic, political, and cultural context be the same for all cases.
<i>“The processing of data is abundant, and the information gathered deep, but unreliability, also limiting the possibilities for replication of the study.”</i>	Some interviews can be different. Nevertheless, to contrast the information provided by the interviewers, a triangulation method was considered from many sources. It includes news and press releases. Besides, the open questions from the questionnaire were used. To surpass the method common bias, many roles were asked, such as professional entrepreneurs related to the activity, franchisor or manager, PA members, and other entrepreneurs.

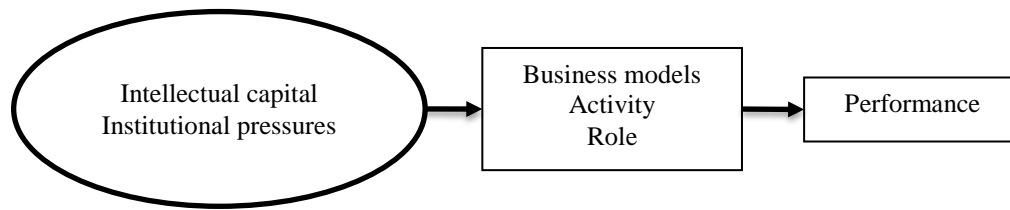
Source: Own elaboration based on Bryman (1988).

3.1.1 Research conceptual frame, research questions and type of questions.

Research conceptual frame.

Miles and Huberman (1994) consider that this scheme is important to do even before to ask the questions to be investigated. Following these authors, the conceptual diagram of Figure 3.1 allows synthesizing the subject of research easily, taking into account the main aspects to be observed during the collection of information.

Figure 3.1: Research schema and theoretical background.



Source: Own Elaboration.

In these activities, the importance of the relationship with other agents is crucial. In Spain, to perform them, professionals must join in PA legally developed and legitimated by authorities. Besides, the power of institutions and leading companies in these activities can minimize the autonomy of entrepreneurs in their own companies. To measure these influences, we are going to study the relation between along the time (Combs et al., 2011) and the relations between the institutions, the companies and markets (Ang and Cummings, 1997).

From Intellectual Capital (IC), there are many ways to evaluate and measure it. In this case, mixes of items were proposed in order to alleviate the measurements. To measure the human capital, we are going to use part of the studies done it by Sveiby (1997). To deal with the structural capital, we will use the Ordóñez de Pablo's work (2004), and for the relational capital, we use the measurements published by Dewhurst and Cegarra-Navarro (2004). Complementary to this theory, we are also interested in deepening the relations among entrepreneurs with their institutions and customers.

The influence of institutions and the intellectual capital required may establish the final business model. This study differentiates between the independent and associated, and developing quantitative analysis that will be structured in the following section; we will find out what of these businesses format shows better results in terms of performance.

Nevertheless, using a qualitative approach, triangulation data is an essential step (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2008; Flick, 2004). That means it is important to obtain the same information from different sources. Examples are workers,

subordinates, journals, news, or reports. The answers of all groups will be valuable, whether they agree or not, for the future of research.

Research questions in the qualitative research.

Many qualitative research manuals believe that the focus of research is the first step for a good approach to research because it will determine the most appropriate methodology to address the research (Yin, 2008). In this sense, the focus of research is to understand the phenomena emergent on private health activities where the BM is changing nowadays. This can be given the emergence of some associated companies that have introduced some measures to increase and exploit the profitability of these activities.

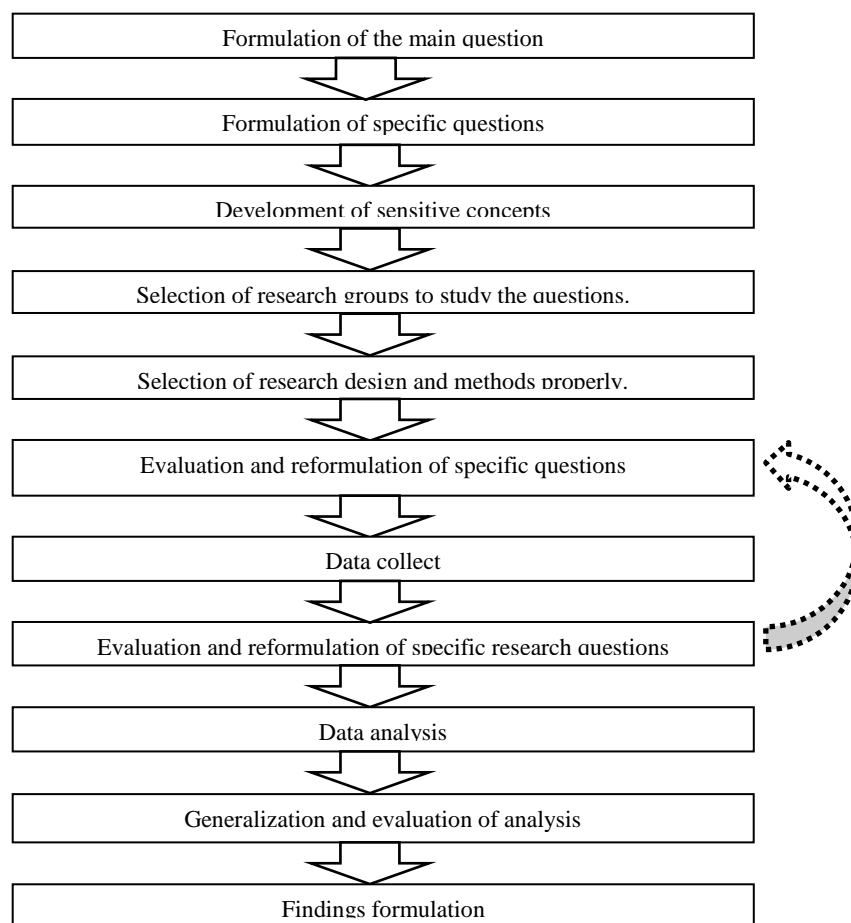
In addition, another advantage to following this methodology is that "*this research accept that the aim of research can be complex and ambiguous, putting all the variables in context, getting less rigorous research, but much more realistic and relevant*" (Cassell and Gummesson, 2006:173). The clearer research questions are, the less possibilities are for researchers to get lost (Flick, 2004). Besides, the wealth of these questions are not only limited to the question itself. Even more, they can show us the requirements to do the research properly, such as how to access the data, documents, or observation strategy. (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The operational and research questions have an exploratory character and can help researchers to develop in-depth relations between different BM. After finishing the research, it is expected to expand the knowledge of relations between the agents involved. Besides, these questions are formulated to ask operational aspects that are present over some time, and cannot be measured as percentages or incidents (Yin, 2008).

Another aim of these questions is to deepen the issue at the highest levels. It is not possible to delimit a particular aspect of the phenomena, but they can connect all variables that affect research cases (Cassell and Gummesson, 2006). However, as noted by these authors, qualitative research "*should be supported by numerical*

data, seeking complementarity on information received” (2006: 171). Besides, as Flick pointed out (2004), the researcher must be open-minded to retouch or modify research questions, due to new information or questions that may arise during the collection of information. This reformulation is observed throughout the process, as in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Research questions' position in the research process.



Source: Flick (2004).

Following Flick (2004), the research questions must have some requirements. The first question Flick considers is the size. Questions should be formulated according to the desired size, deepening a very specific issue. Similarly, for Miles and Huberman (1994), it is important to know what is studied and what is not, and therefore what is and what is not relevant for the investigation. Following the indications of these authors, we believe that it must be clear the scope of the

study, what concepts are included in it, and those that are not. Table 3.3 summarizes what is included and what not on this dissertation.

Table 3.3: Qualitative analysis conceptual research delimitation.

Issue	Included in our study	Not included in our study
Activity	Professional KIBS	Technology KIBS Non-KIBS.
Size	Small firms	Medium companies Big companies
Business models	Independent clinics Franchising outlets Bargain centres Co-operatives	Technologic companies Start-ups e-business
Scope	Spain Private health activities	Other countries Public health services
Education required	Bachelor's Degrees Doctoral studies	Certificate of Higher Degrees Non-qualified professions

Source: Own elaboration based on Miles and Huberman (1994).

This research was focused on studying professional KIBS. More specifically, it develops private health services. The reason was that most of KIBS research was focused on Technological KIBS, avoiding professional ones (Freel, 2006; Davis and McMaster, 2015). Besides, other non-knowledge intensive business services were also avoided.

In terms of desired size, this dissertation is oriented to analyze small firms²³. Such size is common in KIBS activities (Alexandru et al., 2019). Following DentalDoctors report²⁴, the average number of professional employees per clinic is five people, being the 76% of all companies, and usually represent turnover of less than € 500,000 by establishment.

Related to BM, there are a plethora of models depending on the number of entrepreneurs, capital, dependence, etc. In this research, we group them into two groups: the associated and the independent business model. In this sample, the **associated business model** (ABM) involves franchising chains, co-operatives, and bargain centers operating on the activities under study. The **independent business model** (IBM) involves those entrepreneurs that have created their clinic

²³ Following European Criterion (source: www.ipyme.org) microenterprises are those with less than ten employees and an annual turnover less than € 2m.

²⁴ <https://www.dentaldoctorsinstitute.com/>

from zero, according to his or her values, organization, job experience and culture. Besides, we also must inform about the reality of the different BM in these sectors. In this sense, chapter 1 was written to understand the situation of them fully.

According to geographic issues, it is crucial to observe businesses allocated in large cities, where there is a huge concentration of population. However, the opportunities for performing in small and medium cities must be considered; in this sense, the location can register some differences in terms of performance. In any case, all analyzed companies are operating in Spain, given some cultural and economic similarities.

Finally, in terms of training requirements to develop the activity, we consider that it has a very important role in this research. The activities under study require Bachelor's Degrees or further degrees. Professional association membership is also a requirement. Therefore, activities without these requirements will be avoided.

The second issue, Flick (2004) considers, is the area of interest to define the issue. He considers taking into account the resources available by researchers. In this case, the questions determine the population of interest. These sectors under study are KIBS, where PA membership is mandatory, they are highly standardized but, very difficult to replicate given the knowledge requirements.

Finally, Flick (2004) requires establishing the main concepts and triangulation methods. In this sense, doing several interviews, it is expected to see relations between different topics that respondents consider as the most important. Besides, it should be aware of other issues that could appear throughout the investigation, and we have not considered previously in the research design. In this sense, this dissertation is mainly based on four pillars:

- **Entrepreneurship**, This topic has two objectives: First, to know what factors push the cases to be entrepreneurs and to study professions like those under study. Second, to relax interviewees, talking about their lives and their own experiences.

- **Business models**, splitting between dominant (independent) business model and associated business models (including franchising, co-operatives, bargain centres and collaborations between clinics).
- **Intellectual capital** includes what knowledge transmitted, which are the parties are, and the relationship power between them based on knowledge acquisition, maintenance, use, and retraining.
- **Institutional influences**, because the professional associations have the legitimacy to develop some rules, and professional members must follow their policies. PA professional associations use this power, affecting at the end, the performance of the professionals.

It should be added that “*performance*” is not an important pillar in the qualitative study. Given the main aim of this kind of research, qualitative designs are more concerned with understanding how these professionals are organized and what they feel (Rynes and Gephart, 2004). However, taking advantage of the mixed methodology designed, performance will be analyzed deeply in the quantitative study.

Types of questions used in the research.

“*We must distinguish between questions that define states and defining processes*” (Flick, 2004: 65). This author also considers that some questions may be designed to confirm existing assumptions, and others to discover new states or processes. In the protocol (Appendix II), there are some operational questions to ask, which are defined according to the specific field referred to.

Moreover, the iterative process may emerge new questions. As a result, the questions can be reviewed and reformulated throughout the process involved in research, distinguishing between the main question, and specific research questions (Flick, 2004). In this dissertation, the most important question is:

Research question 1: *For small firms operating on KIBS, is there any better business model?*

Nevertheless, we try to respond to the most important factors that can define the main question. In this sense, the IT and IC perspectives allow establishing some auxiliary research questions. These will be:

Research Question 2: *For entrepreneurs operating in KIBS, how does the business model affect the perception of institutional influences?*

Research question 3: *For entrepreneurs operating in KIBS, how does the business model influence intellectual capital investment and management?*

To develop all of these questions, the script of all operational questions was established (Appendix II, Section 1). Each section of this script was designed to answer the main research questions with more detail. In addition, we consider including questions related to financial issues or vision of the future to see the differences between each different BM. As a result, the script has the following sections:

- **The emerging of a business idea:** This section aims to find some institutional explanations in terms of family tradition, social factors, partners, or psychological characteristics. Besides, although this topic is not closely related to the research's aim, these questions may help to calm down our interviewees and to establish some trust between the cases and the researchers (Cassell and Gummesson, 2006).
- **Routine aspects:** These questions were designed in order to analyze issues related to structural capital. It includes procedures and customer register, or system innovations.
- **Training and retraining aspects:** This section analyses some human capital issues. It concludes the mechanisms they use to update their knowledge and with what frequency and how do they acquire it.
- **Franchising companies:** This section is oriented to analyse the impact of franchising chains since they were perceived as a source of institutional influence. The appearance of these BM on health activities emerges some concerns related to the organization of them. For this, the script has some operational questions related to it. Besides, some information related to relational capital may be obtained.

- **Professional associations:** The perception of them from professionals is a very interesting topic to see how PA are sought. Again, the relation between PA and cases will be evaluated.
- **The vision of the future:** The last section of these questions tries to see the level of satisfaction among our interviewees. Linking with the quantitative analysis, we introduce some questions related to the performance in terms of satisfaction.

3.1.2 Research strategy: case study, sample and protocol.

To analyse research questions, Yin's book (2008) considers the case study as an appropriate strategy to carry out because:

- Investigate **contemporary phenomena** at the time and current context.
- Particularly suitable when the **boundaries between phenomenon and context** are not clearly defined.
- There are **multiple sources of evidence**, which converge in a third result.
- The study can benefit from the theory previously developed to collect data and **expand existing approaches**.

Besides, the case study allows to "*describe a unit of analysis given by the researcher, using files and documentation during the investigation, combining with qualitative and quantitative sources over time*" (Rynes and Gephart, 2004: 458).

The case study can be single or multiple. Given the population under analysis, it is desirable to perform a minimum of six case studies, being two for each profession, being associated and independent business models. Also, the PA must be considered. This action aims to look for logical replication in different units analysed.

Unit analysis, pilot case, and sample.

To set the appropriated research strategy, it should be considered in-depth all the objectives of this study with their theoretical framework developed. The next step is to set the unit of analysis. Yin (2008) believes that the unit of analysis is a part where the investigation lies. It can be an individual, an event, or an organization.

For this research, there are two potential units of analysis. The first is the business model. The second is the entrepreneurs. We opted for the latter unit of analysis because it is to whom it is addressed this dissertation at the end, allowing to find the most relevant aspects and processes of decision making that have passed to reach the current point on their businesses. However, the relation between BM and entrepreneurs is very close. Each entrepreneur represents their BM.

Besides, the biggest part of respondents will be entrepreneurs that have run their company. However, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, strengthening research and seeking support to triangulate the data correctly, we must address "*the periphery of the case.*" It refers to the environment of what we study, although not studied directly. Therefore, it includes interviewing several members of the businesses surveyed, not only entrepreneurs. In this sense, the PA members should be included here. Without being entrepreneurs or managers, they are agents who interact with their respective activities. As a result, they are also interesting to study.

To analyze this unit, we have to keep in mind that are people with their own biases, creating multiple imperfections causing imperfect data. This aspect should be aware and understand that control of the data by researchers is much more limited compared to quantitative research (Cassell and Gummesson, 2006). To solve this problem, the authors propose to improve empathy, listening skills, interpretation, and conceptualization, and see the problem from different angles.

The next point to consider is related to the pilot case. This case must be "*unusually accessible and geographically convenient, and possesses easy access to documentary information*" (Yin, 2008). In the case of this research, the pilot cases were two. First, "*Tony Roma's American Restaurant,*" owned in Spain by L.G., and second, we interviewed his franchisee in Valencia M.N. We have considered using these cases for many reasons:

- "*Tony Roma's*" **is not a KIBS company**. It is a typical franchising business model (American restaurants indeed). L.G. (the manager) has

been performing their role for more than 20 years. Previously, he was an economist and salesman for many brands. These issues allow us to refine the questions related to the business models in general.

- **Location:** All cases operate in Spain. Although L.G. lives in Madrid, we had to travel there to ask for the questionnaire. On the contrary, M.N. lives in Valencia. Both entrepreneurs agreed to work with us to develop the questionnaire.
- **Trust relationship:** The entrepreneurs were very interested in participating in research. Besides, they allow us to have easy access to get documentation.

Along with the pilot cases, the other cases should have some features to be part of the research: The first requirement will be to be part of one of the areas of study. The second requirement is to be allocated to Spain. Given this, cultural and economic differences should be lower. In total we developed a total of 12 interviews. In table 3.4 are summarized the main characteristics of them.

Table 3.4: Qualitative research cases.

Ref.	Name ²⁵	Role	Activity	The was case developed at...
PA.1	J.C.	PA secretary	Physiotherapy	University office
PA.2	J.C.M.	PA president	Optometry	PA headquarters
Fsor.3	L.G.	Franchisor (Control)	Hostelry	Restaurant headquarters
Fsor.4	A.M.	Franchisor	Physiotherapy	Franchising Headquarters
Fsor.5	R.G.	Franchisor	Dentistry	Franchising Headquarters
Man.6	P.L.	Co-operative manager	Optometry	Co-operative Headquarters
Fsee.7	M.G.	Franchisee	Dentistry	Her outlet
ExFsee.8	J.C.	Ex-Franchisee	Dentistry	Own clinic
Fsee.9	M.N.	Franchisee (Control)	Hostelry	Restaurant
Ind.10	P.Y.	Independent	Physiotherapy	Own clinic
Ind.11	J.Q.	Independent	Dentistry	His house
Ind.12	R.O.	Independent	Dentistry	Own clinic

Source: Own elaboration.

Doing case studies, interviews are not enough. They will be complemented by collecting and analyzing documentation. All these steps are written in the protocol (Appendix I).

²⁵ Only has been written down the initial letters to maintain the confidentiality clause of the research. With this action, cases were more confident with researchers, obtaining better answers (Baez, 2002).

In the end, Table 3.4 illustrates the cases of this qualitative study. Although this sample has some limitations, we have obtained at least two cases of each role (two PA members, four members of chains, three ABM and three IBM) and two of each industry (Two optometrists, three physiotherapists and five dentists plus two control cases on hostelry). However, we would like to obtain at least one example of each party in each industry. Although we moved to Sevilla, Madrid, Albacete, Valencia to obtain the cases, many entrepreneurs reject the petition to be a case study.

Case protocol.

Yin (2008) believes that formalize the case study is the best choice to increase the reliability of research, and it is necessary to establish guidelines for the researcher to get a data collection of each particular case. To do so, a protocol has been made in Appendix I based on the model proposed by Yin. At this point, all scripts were customized according to the role of each case study. These differences aim to compare the point of view of the respondents to the same reality. If some differences emerge, it could be a gap between parties.

3.1.3 Data collection.

Time horizon.

This research was planned to do it in a maximum period of one year from the submission of the theoretical frameworks. Based on a relatively current theoretical basis, it should be improved, reviewing, and updating new literature. Therefore, the chronological order is as follows²⁶:

- **July 2016:** theoretical refinement on the investigation. Preparation until September 2016.
- **September 2016:** improvement and implementation of operational questions for replication in different alternative models, establishing necessities to contrast information (initial investment, monthly costs, turnover, number of monthly clients, number of contract/working partners,

²⁶ This time horizon it was planned only for qualitative study. Quantitative one was not included.

business life, and other relevant documents). Specific documentation and preparation for interviews in other cases. Review impressions of the other companies analyzed. Theoretical refinement of new proposals. Preparation time (6 months). Research time: (6 months).

- **March 2017:** Conducting interviews in the units of analysis cases. Theoretical refinement on research proposals emerged during the interviews. Review answers collated with other cases and documents published and verified, and incorporate responses based on qualitative data. Duration: (6 months).
- **September 2017:** Data Analysis by Atlas.ti 5.0. Main activities segmentation, integration, coding, processing, and data reduction. Duration: (6 months).

Information collected and data analysis.

The collection of data will be using many tools. First, conducting interviews among cases. During the semi-structured interviews, we will be developed using open-ended questions related to research. This technique allows some data and richness and other non-quantifiable aspects. By contrast, the unit of analysis itself can enter many biases that should be considered and verified. Precisely, to verify the data provided by the respondent, we use a second technique, which involves checking the documentation. This tool will be used checking specialized journals, press releases, sector reports, public interviews, and documentation. Given the size of these companies, accounting data are not available. Thirdly, the quantitative questionnaire includes a final open question for respondents to be free to write down what they want.

For the collection and data analysis, we will be developed using the software "Atlas.ti 7.0", which was provided by the University of Valencia. This program allows working on data collected in a structured way, using codes and developing concept maps.

The codification is an essential step in qualitative studies (Saldaña, 2015). The qualitative study was codified using a theoretical coding strategy. It consists on developing a theoretical dimension in research topic. In next chapter four, theoretical codes are named "initial codes", whereas the codes emerged from concept maps were called "final codes".

The stage reflection.

The last phase of reflection consists of discussions and search for critical thinking and involves, among others (Carrión, 2006):

- Review the research process
- Evaluate the processes of analysis, including emerging issues or ideas.
- Review the processes and structures of the case.
- Look beyond the data to generate theory.
- Change the conceptual framework for incorporating the knowledge and theory generated.

As completion of this stage, we consider arranging a meeting between all participants who have participated in this investigation, announcing the results of it, and making a round table between them to go deeper into the problem and draw possible future investigations. According to Carrión (2006), this stage of reflection ends when the conceptual framework is tested and confirmed to form the new basis of the existing theory. In the end, to make a very interesting contribution, we need to confirm the results shown in the qualitative research using a quantitative approach. This methodology will be developed in the following section.

3.2 Quantitative research design.

3.2.1 Data collection, sample and operationalization of the variables.

As we are discussing, we have two types of primary sources of information. One consisted of interviews to 12 top managers that agreed to participate (qualitative analysis). The other information comes from a data collection using a new web questionnaire that all the Spanish professionals that operate in dentistry, optometry and physiotherapy were invited to collaborate. To do this, we contacted the PA of the three professions under study in Spain (Appendix II and III), which had to forward the questionnaire (Appendix IV) to its members through the online platform "*Limesurvey*". This procedure was carried out with two clear objectives. The first was to get access to a larger sample, and the second to ensure the anonymity of respondents.

Initially, we sent an e-mail to all the companies with an explanation of the survey's purpose and a link to the web survey (in Spanish). Moreover, three weeks after and with the purpose of increasing the participation rate, a second e-mail was sent as a reminder. In line with the objective of the research the questionnaire was devoted specifically to highlighting the findings of the qualitative study previously developed. To facilitate the answers from the interviewees and to capture their responses in a proper way, a 7-point Likert scale was used on which seven denotes complete agreement and one denotes complete disagreement (e.g., "the quality of the service we provide is very much better than that of our competitors). In preparing the questionnaire, the basic recommendations listed in Hair et al (2000) were considered: simplicity, brevity, precision and relevance. The full questionnaire is in the Appendix IV.

The answers were obtained from July to September 2017. After the elimination of incomplete (lack of sensitive information as BM) and incorrect cases (for example firms with more than 10 qualified employees) we have collected a total of 78 that completed the entire questionnaire and filled out all case requirements (size, activity, location, etc). All items related with this questionnaire are shown in the following table:

Table 3.5: Items related to quantitative analysis.

Variables	Item	Measurement	Description
Dependent variables			
Performance	Reaction capability	A	When we detect an unmet need of customers, we react faster than our competitors
	Quality of service	A	The quality of the service we provide is much better than that of our competitors
	Fees	A	The fees for clinic services are more affordable than that of our competitors
Business model		B	0 = Independent business model (IBM) 1 = Associated business models (ABM)
Independent Variables			
Institutional influences	Consumer trends	A	We ask in our environment -providers, administrations, workers or distributors- about consumer trends
	Attention to competitors	A	We are attentive to the services offered by our competitors
	Successful associate competitors	A	In our activity, the most successful competitors are part of a network of clinics - franchises, cooperatives, licenses, etc.
	Influence of PA	A	The professional associations work actively to protect and improve our profession
Intellectual capital perceived	Autonomy	A	The clinic where I perform my professional activity allows me to organize work freely
	Experience	A	Compared with competitors, professionals in the clinic where I develop my professional activity has much more experience
	HR Management	A	in the clinic where I perform my professional activity, the management of human resources - organization, personnel selection- is carried out by the owner or manager
	Loyalty	A	We carry out commercial actions to keep our clients loyal
	Reputation	A	The reputation of our company is greater than that of our competitors
Sectors		B	0= Dentistry 1= Optometry and physiotherapy
Role		B	0= Entrepreneurs 1= Employees
Note: (A = 7-points Likert scale; B= Categorical variables)			

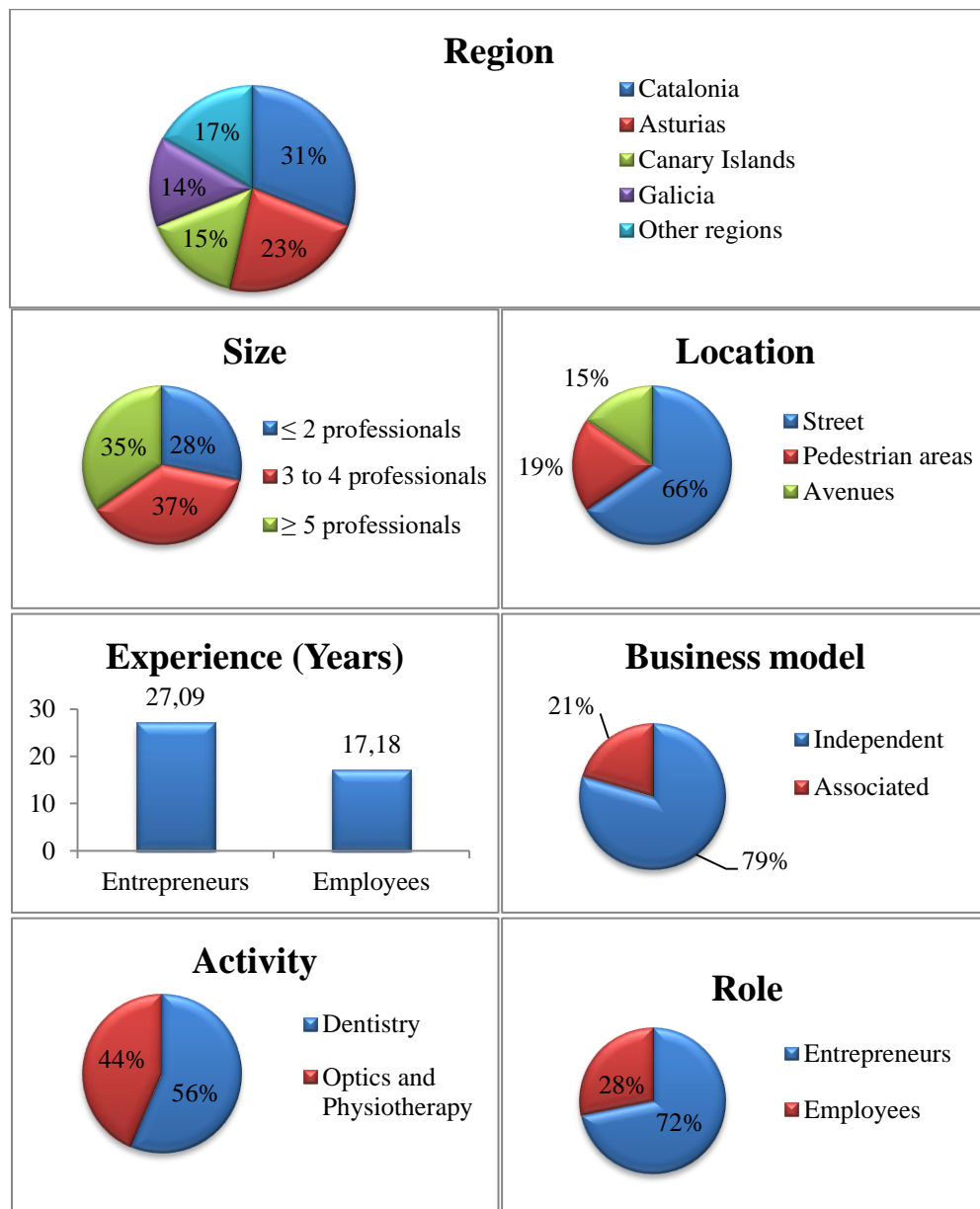
Source: Own elaboration.

3.2.2 Descriptive results and operativization of variables.

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS.

Before the operativizatoion of variables, a descriptive preliminary study was done. Although this section is not related to research aims, it will provide us a framework to know in depth our sample (descriptive statistics, associations, etc.).

Figure 3.3: Descriptive results.



Source: Own elaboration.

Related to the origin of answers, most of them came from Catalonia (31%), Asturias (23%), Canary Islands (15%), and Galicia (14%). Despite this heterogeneity, answers from other regions (e.g.: Andalucía or Madrid) are missing. In terms of the location, most of the clinics are placed in streets (66%). However, it is interesting that 27 cases are in strategic locations like avenues (15%) or pedestrian areas such as squares, pedestrian streets or malls (19%). The experience of practitioners showed some differences. In terms of clinic size, those with less than 5 professionals represent 65% of cases, whereas the other 35% is represented by clinics with 5 or more professionals. Finally, the average from entrepreneurs is higher (27 years since they started their training) compared to employees' (17 years).

All previous indicators were linked to BM configuration and performance variables. The following table illustrates some interesting results:

Table 3.6: Items related to quantitative analysis.

Size		BM	Performance	Location		BM	Performance
≤ 2 employees (N=22)	M	0,14	5,09	Streets (N=51)	M	0,22	5,09
	S.D.	0,35	0,72		S.D.	0,42	0,90
3 to 4 employees (N=29)	M	0,24	5,16	Avenues (N=12)	M	0,17	5,00
	S.D.	0,44	0,93		S.D.	0,39	0,89
≥ 5 employees (N=27)	M	0,22	5,09	Pedestrian areas (N=15)	M	0,20	5,29
	S.D.	0,42	0,88		S.D.	0,41	0,65
Total (N=78)	M	0,21	5,12	Total (N=78)	M	0,21	5,12
	S.D.	0,41	0,85		S.D.	0,41	0,85

Region		BM	Performance
Catalonia (N=22)	M	0,55***	5,14
	S.D.	0,51	0,73
Asturias (N=16)	M	0,00	5,10
	S.D.	0,00	0,97
Canary Islands (N=11)	M	0,09	5,24
	S.D.	0,30	0,70
Galicia (N=10)	M	0,00	4,83
	S.D.	0,00	1,12
Other regions (N=15)	M	0,13	5,00
	S.D.	0,35	0,75
Total (N=74)	M	0,20	5,07
	S.D.	0,41	0,83

Source: Own elaboration.

The most interesting finding was related to the BM. The percentage of ABM in Catalonia was significantly higher than the average (0,55). A feasible explanation of it is that almost all respondents develop their services in Barcelona.

Few answers came from Catalanian villages and towns. In this sense, empirical research illustrates that ABM operates mostly in cities, but their presence is weaker in towns and villages. As an example, professionals operating on other rural regions are less likely to establish ABM, such as Galicia, Asturias or Canary Islands. Some arguments of these differences are the better access to infrastructures and less cultural barriers in cities Wang et al., (2008).

Despite this, other descriptive results were quite homogeneous. Slightly differences were obtained in terms of size, where the smallest companies are more likely to establish IBM without being significant. In terms of performance all issues showed also similar results with the unique exception of Galician companies, where the performance was marginally lower. In any case, differences in terms of size or performance were not significant.

Additionally, we also run some frequency tests of categorical variables. In terms of BM, 62 out of 78 are independent, whereas 16 belong to franchising, cooperatives or bargain centres. We received 34 valid answers from optometrists and physiotherapists, and 44 from dentists. Finally, related to the role developed, 56 came from entrepreneurs, whereas 22 came from employees.

Operativization of variables.

The dependent variable in the analysis are the BM and the Performance.

A) The business model.

Being categorical, the cases were operatized from each of the business models proposed in the questionnaire (independent, franchises, purchasing centers and cooperatives). Given that we could not gather enough cases of each of the business models, we decided to establish two groups: Independent and Associated. Given the nature of our variables, we coded them as dummies. Independent Business Model (IBM) (coded "0") includes the firms that are operating in an isolated and autonomous form. Associated Business Models (ABM) (coded "1") includes firms that had signed some type of alliance

(franchises, purchasing centers or cooperatives). As result of these, we obtained that 77% of the sample belong to IBM, whereas the remaining 23% belongs to the ABM.

B) Variable related to performance.

The Performance of the firms was operationalized using a three-items scale inspired by the work of Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986). Healthcare professionals were asked to rate whether their clinic could respond to customer demands faster than the competitors, whether the quality of service provided was better than that of their competitors, and whether the fees of the clinic services are more affordable than the competitors. The mean of all these three items was 5.11, and the standard deviation was 0.85.

The independent variables in the study were defined in line with the hypotheses, which focus on three organizational and structural characteristics of these firms when they are competing in the markets. They were divided in scale variables, including institutional and intellectual capital variables. Besides, we included other categorical, consisting on “industry” (0 = Optometry and physiotherapy; 1 = Dentistry) and “role of the professionals” (0 = Entrepreneurs; 1 = Employees).

A) Variables related to the institutional environment.

To capture the influences of the institutional environment we use the works of Ang and Cummings (1997) and Combs et al. (2011). To reduce the number of items, another exploratory factor analysis was developed (Table 3.7). The first factor grouped the items consumption trends, attention to competitors, and successful associated competitors. Given the similarity of these items, we decided to name this variable as Market influences (37,80 % of explained variance). The second factor explained 27,55% of the variance, consisting only with influences of the Professionals Associations (PA) item.

Table 3.7: Factor analysis for the institutional environment.

	Descriptive		Components	
	M	SD	Competitive environmental pressures	Regulatory pressures
Consumer trends	4,55	1,81	0,785	-0,071
Attention to competitors	5,05	1,65	0,787	0,024
Successful associate competitors	3,76	2,07	0,506	0,393
Influence of PA	4,47	1,96	0,102	0,889
Total variance explained (sum)			37,80 %	27,55% (65,35%)

Extraction method: analysis of main components.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

The rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Source: Own Elaboration.

B) Variables related to intellectual capital (IC).

Regarding the operationalization of IC variables, we have based on previous studies to establish the items that will form each variable. The IC was based on the work of Sveiby (1997), Ordóñez de Pablos (2004), and Dewhurst and Cegarra-Navarro (2004)²⁷. In this case, the factor analyses do not respect any classification observed in previous literature. Therefore, it was decided to respect IC dimensions obtained from publications and operationalize them on average values (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: Items used to measure intellectual capital dimensions.

	Mean	SD
Autonomy	5,72	1,81
Experience	5,32	1,71
HR Management	6,18	1,67
Human capital (average)	5,28	1,17
Loyalty	4,27	1,93
Reputation	5,27	1,35
Relational capital (Average)	4,79	1,26

Source: Own Elaboration.

Lastly, control variables were considered. Being KIBS, all activities under study here require Bachelor's degrees. However, some differences emerge in terms of training hours required to obtain these titles. Besides, some specialization is

²⁷ The structural capital was not included, given the very high values obtained. In our final sample of 78 cases, the average of this value was 6,38 out of 7 points, and the standard deviation was 0,90. This result is very consistent with other studies such as Nagy (2013) or White (2017).

highly recommended. As a result, many professionals also take a Master's degree. To perform these activities, professionals have to certify from 360 up to 480 ECTS²⁸ in the case of dentists, whereas optometry and physiotherapists have to do it “only” from 300 up to 420. Therefore, a distinction in terms of training hours is clear (Table 3.9). For this reason, KIBS were divided into two groups. One formed for the subsector that required a highest invest in terms of time (Dentistry) from the other two (Optometry and Physiotherapy). As result of these work we created a dummy variable, with “Optometry and Physiotherapy” coded “0” (44% of the cases) and “Dentistry” as “1” (56%).

Table 3.9: Initial training hours divided by professions.

Training hours required	Dentistry	Physiotherapy	Optometry
ECTS (Bachelor's degree)	300	240	240
ECTS (Máster's degree)	60-180	60-120	60-120
Total	360 – 480	300 – 420	300 – 420

Fuentes: Specialized websites

The second independent variable is categorical too, in which the cases were grouped according to their role within the clinics: Entrepreneurs or Employees. With this differentiation we tried to capture the different perceptions about the performance of the BM, the influence of the Institutional pressures and the Intellectual Capital Developed. Although there were other types of roles in the survey (for example, retired professionals or public employees), all of them were rejected. After this work, we coded it as “1” the Employees (28%) and the other cases or the Entrepreneurs as “0” (72%).

3.2.3 Tests and techniques used for the quality data.

Before deciding on the appropriate statistical technique to verify the hypotheses, authors like Field (2009) considers necessary to verify the parametricity of the data. According to this author, four assumptions must be fulfilled (Field, 2009:133): normal distribution of data, homogeneity of variance, intervals, and independence of cases.

²⁸ For more ECTS information: https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en

In the present work, the last two assumptions were achieved using 7-point Likert scales (interval data) and sending the survey to each of the professionals individually and responding to anonymously (case independence). However, the normal distribution of the data and the homogeneity of the variance required statistical tests to confirm the parametricity of the data.

NORMALITY TEST.

To check the normality of the data, two types of tests are suggested (Field, 2009). On the one hand, graphic tests can visualize the normality of the data. However, no normality coefficient is determined, but the assessment is subjective. On the other hand, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test establish a level of significance that allows determining the normality of the data. So, the K-S normality was developed:

Table 3.10: K-S normality test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov^a	
	Statistic	Sig.
Performance	0,499	0,00
PP.AA. influences	0,172	0,00
Market influences	0,097	0,07
Human capital	0,109	0,02
Relational capital	0,155	0,00
a. Lilliefors significance correction		

Source: Own elaboration.

The K-S test showed that all the variables used in the study do not show a normal distribution of values. To solve this problem, Field proposes four types of data transformation that can be useful (2009:155): Logarithmic transformation, squared elevation, reciprocal transformation, and data inversion. However, given the high significance of the data, Field considers appropriate not to force the normality of the sample and accept that the data does not achieve this parametric requirement.

HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCE.

In addition to the normality test, the homogeneity of the variances was also analyzed. This test is intended to verify that these variables can be compared among them. To verify this assumption, the Levene test was used:

Table 3.11: T's Levene test.

	Business model		Role		Activity	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Performance	10,61	0,00	1,67	0,20	17,06	0,00
PP.AA. Influences	0,83	0,36	0,60	0,44	1,74	0,19
Market influences	3,65	0,06	3,43	0,07	0,89	0,35
Human capital	8,91	0,00	1,23	0,27	2,69	0,11
Relational capital	0,92	0,34	4,63	0,04	5,38	0,02

Source: Own elaboration.

The homogeneity test of the variance indicates that performance and some other independent variables are heterogeneous in their variances. Therefore, they do not comply with the parametricity requirements to be able to perform linear regressions. An alternative solution is to develop binary logistic regressions.

LINEARITY TEST.

To surpass this problem, the researchers can implement different statistics techniques (Hair et al, 2000). The use of one or another will depend either the comparisons try to analysed associations between peers of variables (means, correlations, cross tabs), or the effect of them considering the influence of more one variable (regressions). For the latter case, the binary logistic regressions are recommended. However, Field (2009: 273) considers that in addition to the independence of the cases, binary logistic regressions require linearity in the data. In order to verify this aspect we analyzed the linearity the interaction between the predictor and its logarithmic transformation (Table 3.12).

Table 3.12: Linearity test.

Institutions - Performance				Intellectual capital - Performance		

3.3 The qualitative comparative analysis (QCA).

The last part of the previous section was dedicated to detail why the sample obtained does not meet the parametric requirements to be able to develop traditional statistical tests such as regressions or comparisons of means. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test showed high significance in the statistics used, which means that they do not follow a normal distribution. In the test of homogeneity of the variance, some heterogeneity was also obtained. Therefore, this requirement was neither achieved. Finally, in the linearity test performed to be able to develop binary logistic regressions, significant results were also observed in most of the variables, so the use of this technique is not recommended (Field, 2009).

Consequently, it was necessary to look for other techniques capable of extracting results from the sample without parametric requirements. In this thesis, two procedures have been used: a) the *aforementioned* quantitative analyses based on non-parametric and descriptive techniques (epigraph 3.2.2); and b) *Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (QCA). This latter can be considered a method that bridges qualitative and quantitative analysis to assess causation that is very complex, involving different combinations of causal conditions capable of generating the same outcome in small and intermediate size samples (Rihoux and Ragin, 2008).

This technique was used successfully in the entrepreneurship literature. For example, Fernandez-Guerrero et al. (2018) analyzed entrepreneurs who run social companies; Rey-Martí et al. (2017) studied entrepreneurial attributes in the hotel industry. Therefore, we believe the QCA is an excellent technique to analyze entrepreneurs in KIBS companies.

3.3.1 An introduction to the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).

The QCA was developed by the sociologist Charles Ragin and his team in the 1980s. It was developed to resolve some of the limitations of qualitative research methods such as lack of generalization, descriptive character of the phenomenon studied, and the lack of systematicity and replicability in this type of study

(Pajunen, 2008; Rosati and Chazarreta, 2016). Besides, it has not only been used to improve qualitative methodologies but as will be seen below, it has also been used to improve some quantitative studies.

The QCA is "*proposed as a case comparison technique*" (Rigoux and Ragin, 2008: xviii) which, in the words of Rosati and Chazarreta (2016: 2-3), "*uses Boolean algebra to identify what are the factors that are associated with the presence of a result.*" There are many authors (Ragin, 2007; Schneider and Wagemann, 2010; Legewie, 2013) who state that one of the main advantages of using this technique is the systematization of qualitative research, by including statistical processes in this type of methodology. Therefore, the study obtains greater transparency throughout the process of operationalization of variables (conditions and outcomes).

According to Legewie (2013), the QCA is based on two principles: complex causality and the comparison of cases of interest. The first assumes that an event occurs by the combination of a series of causal factors. As a simple example, for a person to have a child, several factors are required. First, it is required to be a woman (a man could not); being fertile (even if a woman, if not fertile, could not either) and finally being able to fertilize an ovum (being a woman and fertile, there will be no child until the egg is fertilized). Therefore, it is considered that for an event to occur there must be several causes given. This explanation would be summarized in the following formula:

$$\textit{Giving birth to a baby} = \textit{To be a woman} + \textit{To be fertile} + \textit{to fertilize an ovum}$$

The second principle (comparison of cases of interest) assumes that the analyzed cases in this type of analysis have been previously chosen by the researchers as a result of the research questions raised and the theoretical approach carried out. This feature implies that some cases can be included/eliminated in the analysis. Although this circumstance may introduce certain level of subjectivity, it should be considered that the QCA aims to "*reveal patterns of association between cases, plus prove causal relationships*" (Legewie, 2013).

This technique is appropriate to replace other, more traditional statistical techniques. Pajunen (2008) states that the use of QCA is based on the use of necessity and sufficiency instead of looking for a linear causality and the effect that one variable has on another. Therefore, although the QCA has a qualitative origin, it also opens up the possibility of using it in quantitative studies.

This statement has been put into practice by some researchers. For example, Glaesser (2008) uses the QCA as an alternative to statistical methods based on regressions. Similarly, Fiss also uses FsQCA as an alternative to working with data that does not meet certain probabilistic distribution requirements (2011: 401). Therefore, this technique can be considered useful for working with data that does not meet the parametric requirements of other statistical techniques of traditional cut.

Despite the relative permissiveness of the technique with some requirements, this technique is not exempt from them. The article published by Schneider and Wagemann (2010) proposed a long series of quality criteria to be met by those researchers who put the QCA technique into practice. Some of the most important and taken into account in this thesis are:

- **To apply QCA with other more traditional data comparison techniques:** As noted above, widely contrasted and used non-parametric techniques will be used.
- **To know in-depth the cases proposed for the study:** Following the recommendations of Ragin (1987) and Basurto and Speer (2012), the entire study was carried out after the qualitative study and wide treatment of the information obtained.
- **The conditions and outcomes must be selected based on the theoretical knowledge used as well as the research process.** All cases have been obtained through the agents in charge of the organization of this type of profession (Professional associations).
- **There should be a follow-up of both the concepts associated with the QCA and the process (calibration + necessity analysis + sufficiency analysis).** This monitoring will be done in the next chapter, the analysis, and discussion of results.

- **Solve contradictory cases using the truth table.** Following Liñán (2010), it was decided to relocate cases using descriptive statistical techniques.
- With the result of the outcome, **the result of the negative outcome should also be published in a parallel analysis.** This step has been scrupulously followed, as it provides relevant information.
- **The technique must be interpreted returning to the cases, and not be applied mechanically.** As a preliminary step to the hypothesis contrast, a need and sufficiency analysis were carried out, taking into account only categorical conditions of cases such as the MN on which they provide their services, the activity they carry out, or the role they occupy in their respective organizations.

As for the existing QCA variations, this technique emerged in its simplest variant (CRISP-SET or CsQCA), in which it was requested that all conditions and outcomes be dichotomized. It was required to establish membership [1] and non-membership values [0]. In subsequent variations, other more elaborate data management processes were included that allowed working with data with several categories (MULTI VALUE - MvQCA) and another that supports continuous variables (FUZZY-SET - FsQCA). In this thesis, this last variant will be used.

The FUZZY-SET QCA (FsQCA) is characterized by three steps (Schneider et al., 2010; Tutistar-Rosero, 2019): calibration, necessity analysis, and sufficiency analysis. However, some authors (Eg .; Ragin, 1987; Basurto and Speer, 2012) emphasize the importance of determining the relevant conditions and outcomes for the analysis before starting this procedure²⁹.

3.3.2 Sample, data calibration and necessity tests.

We implemented the QCA procedure on the data obtained from the questionnaire sent to the different PA. The number of valid cases was 78 (being the cases that responded to all the conditions used in the present work). Far from considering this circumstance as a limitation, the reduced number of cases is an advantage to implement the QCA. In the words of Schneider and Eggert (2014) the ideal

²⁹ This procedure has already been carried out in the literature review and in the hypothesis approach, who underlined the most relevant conditions and outcomes for the study.

number is between 10 and 50 cases, increasing the viability of this technique up to about 100 cases. A higher number of cases may lead to the inclusion of numerous contradictory cases that make it difficult to interpret the results correctly.

To perform the analysis, we followed Schneider and Eggert (2014) recommendations whose establish different steps to follows: sample calibration, test of conditions and reassessment of the sample.

Data calibration.

The QCA and the FsQCA require establishing two thresholds (of membership and non-membership) for conditions and outcomes. Besides, a cross-over point (maximum ambiguity) must be established. To do this, the use of mean or median is accepted (e.g., Skaaning; 2011). In our case, we use SPSS v.24, conducting a frequency analysis to establish the thresholds of membership [0.95] and non-membership [0.05] on the conditions and outcomes. The midpoint was also obtained [0.5]. Given the high number of cases ($n = 78$) and the continuous values of the data, I decided to set the thresholds at approximately 10% higher and lower valuation, following other calibrations (E.g.: Rey-Martí et al., 2017). This same analysis was used to dichotomize those values necessary to be able to develop the truth table (Crisp-set) and non-parametric techniques. The data is summarized in the following table:

Table 3.13: Descriptive and data calibration.

Variables/ Causal conditions	Threshold of Membership	Cross- point	Threshold of Non- Membership	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Cases
BM	0	n/a	1	0,21	0,40	0	1	78
Performance	4	5	6,33	5,12	0,85	3	7	
P.A. Influences	2	5	7	4,41	1,98	1	7	
Market	2	4,67	6	4,47	1,38	1	7	
HC	3,33	5,33	6,67	5,46	0,97	2,67	7	
RC	2,5	5	6,5	4,80	1,24	2	7	

Source: Own elaboration.

Necessity tests.

In the words of Schneider and Eggert (2014), the condition of necessity implies that the presence of the outcome is tied to the presence of a condition (For example: Being a mother \rightarrow Being a woman). However, in social research, it is very difficult to find conditions and outcomes whose necessity is pure (Glaesser, 2008). Therefore, a condition is considered as necessary for the event to occur when recording consistency values greater than 0.90 in the necessity test (Glaesser, 2008; Skaaning, 2011), and cover more than 60% of the cases analyzed (Molina-Morales et al., 2019).

This analysis should avoid mechanical procedures and monitor the results according to the theoretical criteria (Liñán, 2010). In other words, if any condition appears necessary, but they are not credible, it is necessary to establish some explanation or review the cases analyzed.

In our study, the following table shows the necessity tests obtained for the outcomes and its absence for BM and performance (Table 3.13). The results show that all causal conditions were not enough consistent to be excluded in the sufficiency test. Therefore, all conditions will be included in all sufficiency tests.

Table 3.14: Necessity results for BM and performance outcomes

	BM		~BM		Performance		~Performance	
	Consist.	Cover.	Consist.	Cover.	Consist.	Cover.	Consist.	Cover.
PA Influence	0,54	0,24	0,44	0,76	0,58	0,64	0,54	0,56
~ PA Influence	0,46	0,17	0,56	0,83	0,61	0,59	0,66	0,59
Market Influences	0,77	0,30	0,46	0,70	0,68	0,68	0,61	0,55
~ Market Influences	0,23	0,10	0,54	0,90	0,55	0,60	0,65	0,65
HC	0,63	0,22	0,57	0,78	0,74	0,66	0,70	0,57
~HC	0,37	0,18	0,43	0,82	0,52	0,65	0,58	0,67
RC	0,67	0,27	0,47	0,73	0,71	0,72	0,60	0,56
~RC	0,34	0,14	0,53	0,86	0,57	0,61	0,71	0,69

Source: Own elaboration.

The next step is to develop analysis of sufficiency. Sufficient conditions assume that the presence of some condition(s) is usually related to the presence of the outcome (Schneider and Eggert, 2014). Therefore, it is assumed that there may be some cases that produce the outcome, even with the absence of a sufficient condition.

In sufficiency analysis, two concepts must be considered: First, the possible occurrence of **contradictory cases** (those in which the same combination of conditions appears in the presence of the outcome, but also in its absence). To resolve this circumstance, results require a consistency greater than 0.80. Second, **counterfactual cases** may also appear. In the QCA it is understood that these are residual combinations. To treat these “exceptional” cases, Liñán (2010: 25-26) proposes four alternatives: First, go back to the primary sources and reconsider if there are other cases similar to those previously considered as exceptional. Second, use other secondary sources to try to relocate cases. Third, consider treating these cases as true (sufficient) or false (not sufficient). Finally, the possibility of treating cases as true (parsimonious solution) or false (complex solution) at the same time, and observing the conclusions obtained from the analysis. In this work, we have chosen to follow the second and third options, when the software used has not been able to relocate this type of case. The results of analyses of sufficiency will be discussed and developed in the next chapter.

3.3.3 Truth tables.

Descriptive by nature, the truth tables represent all possible combinations that can be given in the tests. It means that having n conditions, all possible combinations will be 2^n (Elliott, 2013:3). The values included in these tables have to be dichotomous [0,1], in which the midpoint usually serves to differentiate between being a case of interest [1] or not [0]. In the case of this dissertation, all truth tables developed are allocated in Appendix V (Tables 4 and 5). They are shown according to the order of the analyzed hypotheses.

The table 7.4 (Appendix V) illustrates the relation between the BM and institutional and intellectual capital causal conditions. 10 out of 16 combinations were observed (2^4). The most representative with ten cases is the one where PA influences, Market influences; HC and RC conditions are present. Some combinations are consistent to the outcome IBM. In terms of consistency, some combinations surpass the minimum required of 0.80. Therefore is expected that the sufficient test will be able to obtain some interesting results.

Finally, the table 7.5 (Appendix V) illustrates the truth table that includes the outcome performance with institutional and IC conditions. Again, 10 out of 16 combinations were observed. The one where all conditions are present is the most representative one, with ten cases. Besides, some combinations were consistent enough to obtain some interesting results in the sufficient tests.

In summary, this section has drawn a picture of the activity in Spain and the sample obtained on the questionnaire (Appendix IV) with the combinations obtained on the truth table after the proposed calibration (Appendix V). The next sections show the results obtained during both qualitative and quantitative research.

3.4 Final remarks.

This chapter has shown the main features related to our research design. Given the characteristics of our sample in terms of size and activity developed, we considered implementing a mix-methodology to fully understand business models' phenomena in private health small firms and the relation among BM, performance, institutions, and intellectual capital.

The qualitative study was designed to understand the current situation of dentistry, physiotherapy, and optometry services in Spain. Being conservative activities, they are changing their services seeking efficiency and more presence in the market, without undermining their quality. So, the qualitative study was developed to acknowledge the feelings and perceptions of the professionals operating on these activities.

Once we designed the qualitative study, our second step was to create the quantitative one. Based on the qualitative and the literature reviewed, we developed a questionnaire to send to Spain professionals. It was obtained 78 questionnaires fully completed and filling all items used in this research, including BM configuration, performance, institutional, and intellectual capital variables. After this, the operativization, the measurements of variables, and the quality data analysis were done. The results and tests showed that traditional parametric tests were not appropriated to develop. As a result, it was necessary to obtain another alternative statistical procedure. In this dissertation, a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) was created combined with other non-parametric tests. We prepared the QCA data running some preliminary analyses of necessity and observing true tables.

From that last analysis, we have detected that our research's objectives can be achieved by combining different analysis techniques. The proposed conditions and outcomes fill the requirements established for adequate QCA. Given these premises, in the next chapter, we will test the hypotheses and discuss the main results obtained through sufficiency analysis.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.

This project tries to study the effect of the business model on small knowledge-intensive services companies' activity and analyze the role that institutions and intellectual capital play in their performance. The first part (chapters one and two) presented the theoretical bases. The second has explained the methodology used (chapter 3). Here, the present chapter shows the main results derived from the qualitative and quantitative analysis. The central aim of it is to answer the research questions proposed and to check the developed hypotheses. It has structured in four sections.

The first section introduces the main characteristics of the analyzed industry (dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy activities). This information shows that all these professions are growing on their number of practitioners and their ratio compared to the population. The second section expands descriptive information from qualitative cases. We used a theoretical coding strategy to develop the initial and final codes from the two perspectives proposed. The third section explains the quantitative study results using the QCA technique combined with other tools such as previous findings from a qualitative study, non-parametric tests, and reviewing prior literature. The main aim of this section is to test the hypotheses at different levels of analysis. In the last and fourth section, we summarize and discuss the main results of our study.

4.1 The situation of the private health services in Spain.

In this section, we show relevant information about the PHS where coexist some business models. The three activities are characterized by their higher levels of knowledge requirements, obeying all their members to have a Bachelor's Degrees and professional association membership requirements.

Besides, there are other reasons. First, these activities are KIBS (OCDE, 2016; Chung and Tseng, 2019). That means some tasks require big efforts to be standardized. However, standardization does not come from companies. Instead, the education required and professionals are those influencers who demand certain levels of homogeneity. In this sense, the high knowledge requirement of these professionals can influence, at some level, the relationship between them and the different business models. In other words, companies' needs may go against professionals accepted behavior, emerging the possibility of conflicts between companies and the community of professionals.

Even though the analyzed activities require high levels of knowledge, they are not entirely homogenous. It is expected to find some useful results to clarify the relationship between the entrepreneur and the other agents involved in the activity, including professional associations, co-operatives, franchising chains, or bargain centers.

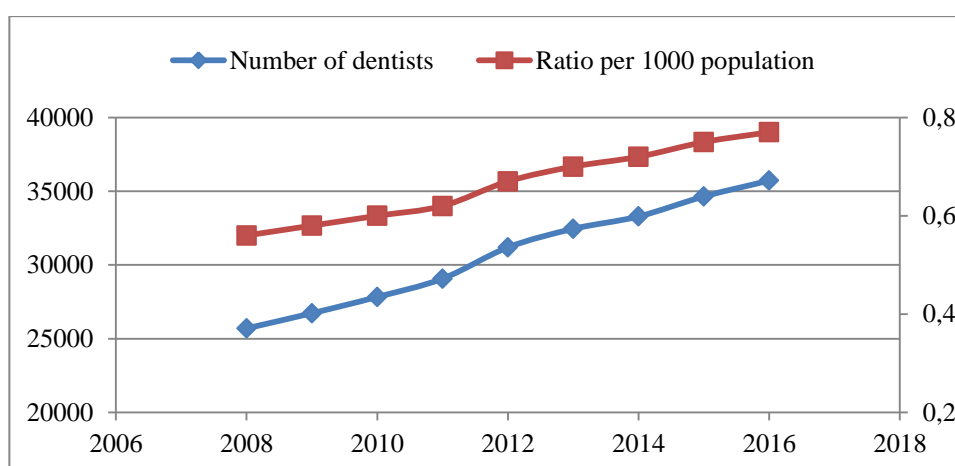
Second, there is a controversy in KIBS with ABM and the quality of service they provide. Specifically, franchising chains and insurance companies have been widely criticized by other agents and companies. Given this, the following part of this section is oriented to introduce KIBS, such as dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy. It includes their origin in Spain and the main results from Spanish market labor.

4.1.1 The dentistry activity in Spain.

The dentistry emerged in Spain in the XVI century during the Reign of Catholic Monarchs (Gaxiola et al., 2011; Sanz-Serrulla, 2017). Later, during the XIX

century, it emerged the first Spanish College of Dentistry in Madrid until the formalization of the Bachelor's Degree of Stomatology in 1948, changing the name in 1986 as Dentistry. Nowadays, dentistry is changing its BM. The arrival of franchising and insurance clinics has opened new marketing techniques. The evolution of these clinics constitutes a point of supreme interest in this investigation. In 2008, the private dentistry activity represented 97% of all gross in Spain³⁰. Nowadays, it represents more than 35.000 dentists operating in Spain. Figure 4.1 summarizes the evolution of dentistry in Spain. The growth of it concerns the research on this activity. The main reason was published by Llodrá-Calvo and Bourgeois (2009): Although the Spanish population increased 2'2% from 1987 to 1997, the number of professionals was 136% in the same period.

Figure 4.1: Dentist workforce in Spain (2008-2016).



Source: OCDE stats, 2018.

Related to their professional situation, the previous study faced our main concern. Experts on dentistry in Spain expect some levels of associationism among dentists at different levels (Llodrá-Calvo and Bourgeois, 2009:37). However, the results from OCDE illustrate a growing number of professionals that reduce their bargain power. Therefore, it is easy to expect an increasing feeling of uncertainty.

³⁰ Source: OCDE

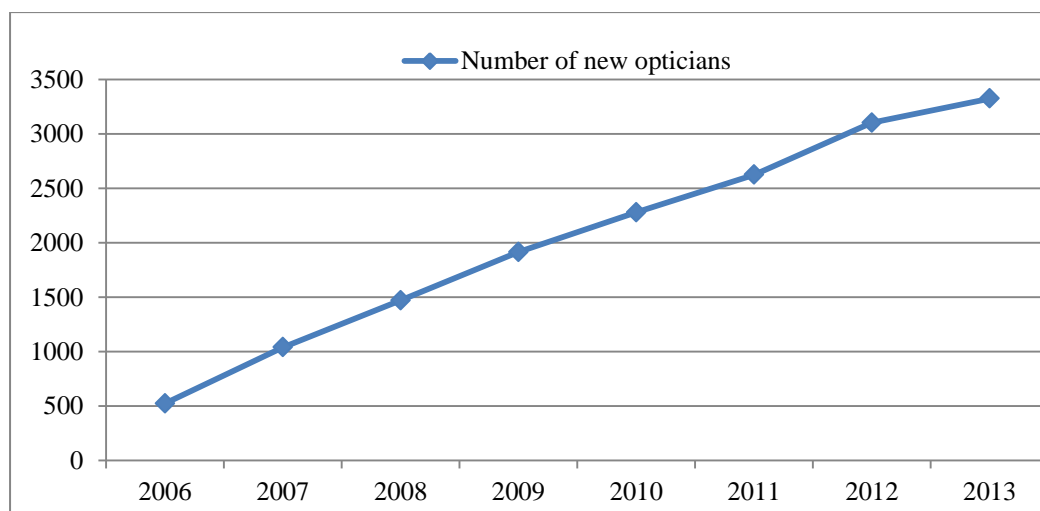
4.1.2 The optometry activity in Spain.

The optometry in Spain has a father: It was Benito Daza de Valdés, the first person who works with glasses (Rueda-Sánchez, 1993). He published the first book in the world about the use of lenses. During the XVIII century, the ophthalmology emerged as a specialty related to surgery training. In terms of science, the first journal was published at the beginning of the 20th century, being “*Crónica Oftalmológica*.”

Related to our topic, optometry constitutes a great variety of alliances and formats. In 2012 there were 10.022 clinics operating in Spain³¹. From all of them, 5763 were operating under bargaining centers, 2155 were cooperatives, 551 were operating under franchising chains; whereas 1553 were independent. According to figure 4.2, from 2006 to 2017, the number of new optometrists has been multiplied by seven.

It is relevant to add that from the same source, the annual turnover in the period 2009-2012 shows a decreasing trend. During these years, bargaining centers decreased by 21%; cooperatives, 19%; and independent clinics, 27% less. Despite this, franchising reduced their turnover only to 9%.

Figure 4.2: Optometrists variation balance in Spain (2006-2013).



Source: *Libro Blanco de la visión en España*, 2013.

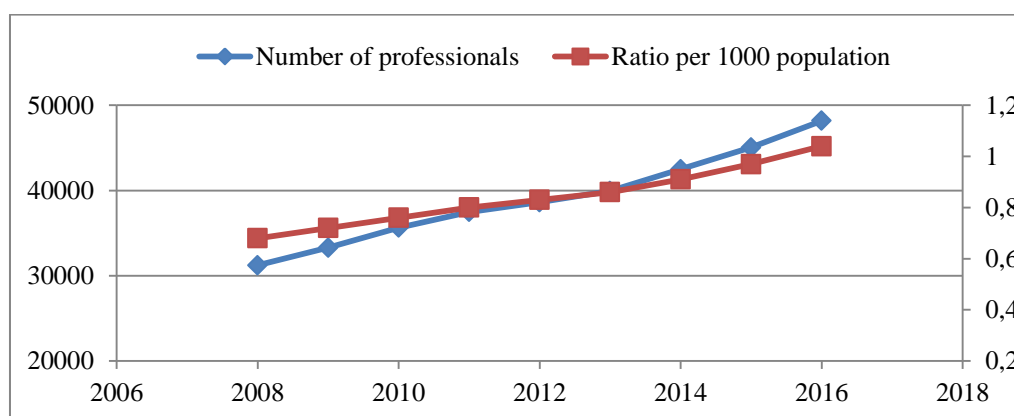
³¹ Source: *Libro blanco de la visión en España* (2013).

4.1.3 The physiotherapy activity in Spain.

The physiotherapy emerged in Spain, given the Law of education of 1857. This law regulated the profession of medicine studies. In terms of specialization, physiotherapy emerged in the fifties at the same time that many technician schools emerged (Vidal et al., 2001). The Spanish professional association arose from the 1st Spanish National Congress of Physiotherapy in 1969.

Following data from OCDE, in figure 4.3, we can see an increase in the physiotherapy workforce in Spain during the period 2008-2016. Besides, the ratio of professionals in each 1000 population has increased by 36% in the same period.

Figure 4.3: Physiotherapy workforce in Spain (2008-2016).



Source: OCDE stats, 2018.

In summary, and after analyzing the sectorial data from these three professions, some conclusions may arise:

First, all activities register an increase in the ratios of their professionals from 2008 to 2016. These data confirm that competitiveness of these activities is growing up very fast, following previous results such as DentalDoctors report or Yamamoto et al. (2011). Therefore, new policies have to be applied to maintain the survival rate of these clinics.

Second, the increasing in competitiveness has changed the role from institutions and market organizations. The more dynamism perceived in optometry, dentistry and physiotherapy affects companies, wishing to be more competitive. It is easy to expect that the most efficient companies will be more ready to be success.

Finally, despite the increasing in the number of professionals, almost all companies are small firms. All of them obtain benefits from the size in terms of flexibility (Jones, 2003), or adaptability to new customers' trends (Camisón et al., 2010). However, these small companies also bear some weaknesses related to their size such as poor entrepreneurial owners' ability, limited human resources, weak financial standings, and others (Buratti and Penco, 2001). So, although all KIBS studied here register concentration companies' trend, they still remain profitable but being under many threats from new business models with higher resources.

4.2 Results from the qualitative analysis.

4.2.1 Findings related to the institutional influences.

Institutional theory illustrated that their effects are coercive, mimetic, or normative. As a first step of the analysis, these dimensions were considered initial codes. They were developed in a set of final codes using Atlas.ti software. The following table summarizes the results:

Table 4.1: Initial and final codes related to institutional theory.

Theory	Dimension – initial code	Final codes
Institutional theory	Coercive isomorphism	Punishment policies
		Education requirements to run the business
		Bureaucracy pressures
	Mimetic isomorphism	Business opportunity
		Market maturation
		Turbulence
	Normative isomorphism	Social facilitators
		Additional training requirements
		Professional association influence

Source: Own elaboration.

COERCIVE INFLUENCES.

In this research, all quotes were organized with three codes related to the coercive influence. These are the punishment policies, education required, and bureaucracy.

The punishment policies.

The easiest way to see the coercive isomorphism is through fines and complains. In this case, the interviewed franchisors consider the existence of some punishment policies in terms of reputations from professional associations and independent professionals. On the contrary, the PA members deny this kind of fines to the chains. As a result, it is feasible that there is a different perception of “punishment” from the actors. For ABM, reputation is included (bad advertising), but for PA, punishment is only related to economic fines. To acquire more knowledge related to this topic, the triangulation with specialized journals shows

some controversy about the relation between franchising chains and professional associations (See Appendix VI, Table 6).

The education required to run the business.

To perform the activity, all parties agreed that the professionals have to obtain their Degree at Universities. However, the franchising chains allow non-professionals entrepreneurs the opportunity to create their clinic on these activities if they hire already trained professionals.

The only exception related to the minimum requirements was provided by control cases. Although they recommend some level of education to make it easier, they do not ask for prior training or experience. In this case, the triangulation with journals and news are not necessary given that all parties say similar things (See Appendix VI, Table 7).

The bureaucracy procedures.

The results (Appendix VI, Table 8) show that the independent professionals and associated have had many problems to fill up all legal requirements. On the other side, the franchisors are more used to set up outlets, creating an experience effect that alleviates this feeling.

MIMETIC INFLUENCES.

Following the previous structure, the dimensions of mimetic isomorphism was developed on three final codes: These are a business opportunity, maturation, and turbulence in the activity.

The business opportunity.

First, we asked our cases about the threats and opportunities they see on the activity. However, given the freedom that respondents have, some quotes were

extracted from other sections, especially those established at the perception of the business model in the future.

The cases have demonstrated some concern about the opportunity these activities represented at the beginning of their professional life. They have shown huge numbers in terms of profitability. As a result, inefficient companies can operate with some levels of success. The emergence of other chains, such as co-operatives or franchising in their activities, has reduced their profitability. To surpass this threat to IBM, professionals (and PA) beg for increasing their services quality. They decide it by establishing some specialties in the professions, using new techniques, and pushing to obtain more recognition from the professionals (see Appendix VI, Table 9).

Additionally, some literature review supports business opportunities in other PHS activities around the world. For example, the paper published by Hyder et al. (2019) analyzed medical tourism in emerging markets such as Thailand, Malaysia, or the Philippines³². All these countries receive international customers due to low-cost treatments and qualified professionals, being another example of business opportunity.

The maturation stage of the activity.

The main difference was obtained by comparing the answers provided by the franchisors (traditional versus non-traditional). On the one hand, the franchisor allocated on hostelry (F_{sor.3}) talks about the guarantees to protect their franchisees (in the present tense). On the other hand, the franchisors allocated on dentistry and physiotherapy talk in future tense about the activity, and not talking about their franchisees, doing it about the activity in general terms. We interpret these differences in terms of the maturity of the activity (Appendix VI, Table 10).

From another point of view, the landing of ABM has established some changes in the independent entrepreneurs. Confirming what franchisors said, the previous

³² More specifically, they studied ophthalmology clinics in Phillipines, managed by professional investors.

experience as franchisor allowed J.C. (ExFsee.8) to set up his clinic more efficiently. As an example, he is looking for ground floors, in order to copy some policies established by franchising chains.

The turbulence in the market.

Our third code was obtained in two ways: First, the relationships created between these agents and second, from competitiveness perceived in the sector (See Appendix I: Script). To do this, cases were asked about the relationships they have with other agents involved in the activity, and secondly, asking them about how other agents have influenced them. In this sense, professionals and associated chains are influenced by their suppliers through the visits of colleagues working for them. These efforts provided by suppliers may establish some levels of turbulence (Appendix VI, Table 11).

NORMATIVE INFLUENCES.

Following the structure of previous sections, the “normative isomorphism” was developed on social facilitators, the additional training required, and the influence of PA.

The social facilitators.

In general, all parties were unsatisfied with the social facilitators perceived to promote entrepreneurial activity (Appendix VI, Table 12). However, there are some exceptions: two independent entrepreneurs received a fixed amount of money (Ind.10 and 11). Besides, the dentist franchisor (Fsor.5) considers that have received helps from the public and private organizations due to their complexity and previous experience in the activity. However, one of his franchisees (Fsee.7) says the opposite (she has not received any help or grant). From our point of view, this is a gap between franchisor and franchisee, and also a potential source of conflict. Then, this finding should be fixed in order to improve the franchisor-franchisee relationship. The other cases consider that public administration does not help them at all, even put them in trouble (Fsor.3).

With this code, we can conclude that the BM configuration is not affected by social facilitators. However, we found that the allocation of services is a key issue to obtain or not funds and helps. The clearest example of these cases is M.G. (Fsee.7). She lives in Albacete (region of Castilla-la-Mancha), and she did not receive any help or funds from public administrations being a businesswoman under 30 years old. A similar case (Ind.11) in terms of age (less than 30 years old) and at the same industry (Dentistry) but operating on another region (Valencia) obtained a sensitive amount of money (7.000€).

The additional training required.

To obtain this code, the cases were asked about previous training and experience must have to perform the job. We codified their quotes as “*additional training required.*” Although legally all activities require only a Bachelor’s Degree to perform the activities, the professionals' understudy demand tacitly more training. This is a clear example of normative influence. The ethical code surpasses the legal requirements. The table 13 (See Appendix VI) illustrates how the professionals demand more than legally required.

The most remarkable difference in this sense comes from P.Y. (Ind.10). Although she is a physiotherapist, she prefers to hire professionals who recently graduated without experience to adapt them her way of working. In the same vein, for R.O. (Ind.12) experience is not important:

“Experience is a double-edged sword. It depends on what you are looking for. What do you want, learn from another, or teach your way of working? If what you are looking for is to teach your way of working to another person so that in the future he can continue with your line, you can indoctrinate him. I would look for someone who had much-specialized training, although the experience is not important”.

From another point of view, Ind.11 criticizes the level of education at the end of the Bachelor's Degree. This comment supports the additional training required from professionals to develop the activity with some guarantees:

“At the end of the Bachelor’s Degree, you can make dental fillings, some extraction, and defend yourself in front of emergency situations. However, you are not trained to do orthodontics, to do some difficult endodontics ... so I think you should do a specific training before touching patients”.

Following this argument, some chains establish retraining policies to help their members on these issues in order to surpass some limitations related to bachelor’s degrees:

“We have a training department, what it does is together with suppliers we look for the general needs the optometrists have, and we do classroom courses and webinars, provider webs, and in some cases we do courses For all said, we consider the additional training requirements is highly related to the professional motivations”. (Coop.6)

Moreover, the PA try to overcome the limitations of their members related to additional requirements. This issue is analyzed on the following topic, studying the services offered by PA.

The services influenced by professional associations.

The minimum training required to perform these activities is tacitly weak. Observing this, it is remarkable that PA offer some services related to helping their members. When we did the interviews, we asked the entrepreneurs about the PA services (coded literally). Surprisingly, professional members have not realized that their PA can bear some legal procedures. The potential use of these services could reduce the amount of bureaucracy the entrepreneurs must fill. The conclusion is that some services are not used properly by chains, entrepreneurs, and professional members. They only perceive services related to social responsibility insurance, basic courses, and social events. On the contrary, PA’ offer many other services included in their membership fees. To analyze this code, we asked our cases, *“How does the PA help their members?”*³³. The table 14 (Appendix VI) summarizes the most important quotes.

³³ For entrepreneurs, we asked *“How do you think professional association can help you be more competitive?”* Besides, we asked them *“How do professional associations influence your business?”*

4.2.2 Findings related to the intellectual capital perspective.

The second part of this section is oriented towards the IC analysis. Taking into account some codes provided by previous literature, we have analyzed the three IC dimensions, being human, structural, and relational capital. Table 4.2 summarizes the initial and final codes we have worked on and developed to do the analysis.

Table 4.2: Codes related to intellectual capital dimensions.

Dimension	Codes related
Human capital	Initial training
	Retraining issues and frequency
	Specialties
	Entrepreneurs and professionals' previous experience
	Retraining capabilities
	Workers
Structural capital	Initial investment
	Coordination and knowledge transfer mechanisms
	Job description
	Manuals and protocols
Relational capital	Agreements
	Franchising relation
	Professional association image
	Competitiveness
	Corporate social responsibility (CSR)
	Feedback
	Agents support

Source: Own elaboration.

HUMAN CAPITAL (HC).

The initial code of “*human capital*” was developed after the analysis. The final codes related to HC were specialties, professionals, and entrepreneur's previous experiences, initial training, retraining capabilities, and the number of workers.

Previous training and experience required.

The cases have shown that they hardly hire ten employees per clinic. In this sense, M.G. (Fsee.7) represents the biggest company in terms of employees, being ten workers including herself. This feature means that workers, entrepreneurs, and owners develop many tasks, not only those related to their professional profile.

To analyze the initial training and previous experience required to perform the activity, we have got into trouble to analyze these codes. These problems were given by the intervention of many parties on one single company (alliances, entrepreneurs, associations, hired professionals) and the plethora of tasks they develop. Therefore, we have considered classifying in this way: first, we will talk about the auxiliary tasks, and secondly, we show the findings related to critical tasks. This classification of tasks was provided by Kaufmann and Eroglu (1999).

Knowledge related to auxiliary tasks.

The previous knowledge required to start the activity is one source of conflict between the cases. Some entrepreneurs (professionals or managers) have shown some differences in terms of previous training required. The quote provided by A.M. (Fsor.4) summarizes the conflict:

“In the business world, you do not need to have any experience (...). In this franchise chain, in particular, you do not need anything to be able to manage it because Praxia (franchising brand) helps you with everything: managing, training, and teaching.

This speech goes against some comments provided by other professional entrepreneurs and PA. However, although some of the interviewed illustrated this conflict, the triangulation with the questionnaire (Appendix IV) provides other useful answers. At the end of our survey, open were introduced where the respondents could freely type whatever they want to say. Some interesting quotations related to who can open a clinic related to these activities. Their quotes illustrate the levels of conflictivity on these activities:

“There should be some regulation where only graduates in dentistry could set up a clinic because the franchises and insurance are ending the quality of the profession and forget that it is about health.” (Female odontologist from Las Palmas - Canary Islands -Self-employed and active since 2002).

“(…). Another lucid measure would be that only stomatologists or dentists could open dental clinics, this would end with entrepreneurs who see in dentistry, a way to invest and make money”. (Male odontologist from Pontevedra - Galicia -, self-employed and active since 2009).

Despite this, the chains establish some initial training period, especially for their partners who are not professionals in the sector. Given this, the intervention of chains on the outlets' management converts the main weakness of non-professional entrepreneurs (lack of critical knowledge, the profession itself) on some potential advantage, training them on auxiliary tasks that are a source of potential advantage. In this sense, they use better advertising campaigns, supplying advantages and efficiency mechanisms than professional entrepreneurs do not get used to using it:

"In our clinics, there must be a director of the clinic at economic and management level (...). In this case, no studies are required, but for our part, yes, we ask for a few studies to carry out significant management of turnover (...). (We provide) A one-week training course and another week of clinical training (for franchisees), but we cannot require our franchisees to be displaced for a month here, given the expenses involved with. I think the course should be a minimum of one month. However, once we set up the clinic, I move there, help them, supervise them, etc".
(Fsor.5).

"We talk especially about the productivity of the clinics, about how we can attract more clients, about possible additions that we can make, about training courses, and especially we talk about the outlet management" (Fsor.4)

To validate these quotes, independent entrepreneurs struggle with the roles to be professional and entrepreneurs. They use to need much time-oriented to solve the auxiliary tasks:

"Maybe 20 or 30%, but it is a long time that goes to manage the business. What happens is that is my wife is also there, and she helps me a lot. If I had to manage these issues instead of her... poof! In the end, I use to organize the job, and she is taking care of other topics. It is a family business". (ExFsee.8).

"Well, I have to come on Saturdays and Sundays to do these tasks, because I do not have time during the week. Let's say every two months. I use two or three whole days to catch up". (Ind.10).

"One day, I started to calculate, and it is easy to do 60 hours per week. Ten hours per day is almost usual, and if we add the 5 hours on Saturdays, then arrive at 60 hours". (Ind.11).

These extra hours of working can show some inefficiency in terms of management. The bureaucracy issues and other auxiliary tasks represent an enormous time spent on other activities beyond the critical tasks. In this sense, to provide some efficiency tools could improve their quality life of working. This

topic is especially interesting given the services provided by PA that entrepreneurs do not use (see section related to normative influences).

Knowledge related to critical tasks.

The lack of critical knowledge pointed out that those entrepreneurs without specific knowledge related to the activity must acquire it throughout hiring already trained and experienced professionals:

“What you need is to have highly trained professionals. Unfortunately, a newly graduated physiotherapist does not have enough experience and training”. (F_{sor}.4).

“The hygienist and the odontologist had prior experience when they started working here. The hygienist in a clinic in Albacete, and the odontologist in the dental clinic of the husband”. (F_{see}.7).

On the other side, entrepreneurs with training related to the activity prefer to hire professionals without previous experience (Appendix VI, Table 13). Their arguments are related to teaching them how to work according to their procedures:

“When a new nurse is hired, the older one explains how we work, and later she stays with me, reviewing the whole procedure. We could say that the work we explain verbally through examples between the nurses and I. Some manuals explained the way to advance what are certain treatments, but come on. They are already trained (ExF_{see}.8).

From another point of view, a different type of BM affects this issue. P.L. (Man.6) adopts another type of relationship between him and associated members. He shows more freedom than other cases in terms of clinic management among their associated members. This difference clearly defines different degrees of risk assumption from the parties according to the BM:

“Each partner creates their optometry clinic according to their preferences. We support more or less all the optometrists, but we do not demand any training. It is assumed that if someone wants to mount a clinic, he or she has already been properly formed”.

Retraining issues and frequency.

These codes will be analyzed, putting special attention on knowledge transfer policies and frequency to acquire new knowledge and to share some coordination tasks. These are:

A) The retraining as an investment.

Some cases consider retraining as a source of competitive advantage. Although there are some exceptions, Independent entrepreneurs think in that way:

“You have to train in new techniques, do things well, and with a balanced price. If your behavior is like that, you are oriented for success”. (ExFsee.8).

“We have to offer new things. We will do it in January. We have to train ourselves in things that not everyone can do”. (Ind.10)

In this vein, the PA says that their members retrain their capabilities according to their customers' requirements, not doing it according to their lack of some skills:

“What calls us is that patients are the ones who ask for the treatment. (...)the patient is the one who tells you what you want him to do, because in the end, they associate treatment - effectiveness, and that is where the physiotherapist should have more protagonism (...). (As a result) You may notice that the PA offers a course of physical exercise and has not submitted ten. It has proposed a shock wave, and none has been submitted. However, it turns out that electrolysis, kinesis, and dry puncture is fashionable. You offer them, and it fills quickly”. (PA.1)

B) The knowledge acquisition sources.

This code allowed analyzing the source of knowledge. In this sense, there are two trends (Appendix VI, Table 15). The first current would be related to acquiring the knowledge only from suppliers, whereas the source of knowledge would provide the second one.

This difference in terms of knowledge acquisition sources shows that retraining is not only acquired due to take profitability for professional entrepreneurs. They have a component-based on learning and curiosity. They are ready to learn this technique, although they do not use it in their professional life. On the other hand,

other entrepreneurs prefer to use the knowledge provided by suppliers, looking for more profitability from their knowledge retraining.

C) The retraining frequency.

From one side, franchisors and PA share the knowledge in terms of one or two months, based on courses from agreements with other companies (suppliers and partners), journals, or magazines. On the other side, independent entrepreneurs try to acquire their knowledge through congresses (see Appendix VI, Table 15).

Specialties.

Although there is not any formal specialty related to these professions, all parties are fighting to have more recognition in this way (See Appendix VI, Table 9). PA and entrepreneurs bet to create formal specialties to improve their position and to provide more quality in their work.

“I am a specialist on endodontists (...). I work as a general dentist, which is a very wide range, but specific things like implant implants, which due to my abilities. It is something I could do, but as I have not been trained in it, I do not put it”. (Ind.11).

“There are no specialties yet, although we are at it. So, this month's editorial is dedicated to creating specialties for specialists. We are now attempting the recognition of specializations. (PA.2).

“Then we try to offer other things. For example, we offer pelvic floor. We have the physiotherapists very formed, and we use new techniques”. (Ind.10).

Therefore, tacit specialties are a reality in these professions. The professionals only work on cases that require their skills and not doing it on others that do not feel already trained to develop. In these cases, they establish some agreements with colleagues:

“I went to Barcelona to do a master's degree in orthodontics (...). When I finished, I came to Valencia and started to work. I spoke with two career friends who asked me to go to their clinics to perform orthodontics. They had begun to put the first brackets and correctors, but they reached a point that they felt unable to put more elaborate correctors, and that was when they called me”. (Ind.12).

On the other side, the absence of quotes related to specialties from franchisors and managers shows a very interesting point that will be discussed on the conclusions of this chapter.

STRUCTURAL CAPITAL (SC).

Taking into consideration the literature existent, and with our text analysis, we obtained four codes related to SC. Those are an initial investment, coordination mechanisms, job descriptions and manuals, and protocols.

Initial investment required.

In this section, we analyze the economic resources required to start a professional activity. Our results show that the minimum capital required would be around 30.000 to 100.000. Table 4.3 summarizes the quotations provided:

Table 4.3: Initial investment required.

Ref.	Initial investment	Source
PA.1	30.000 €	Interview
PA.2	100.000€	Interview
Fsor.3	360.000€	Interview + Franchisor's white book. (2018)
Fsor.4	50.000€	Interview
Fsor.5	122.500€	Franchisor's white book (2018)
Man.6	30.000€	Interview
Fsee.7	122.500€	Franchisor's white book (2018)
ExFsee.8	36.000	Interview
Fsee.9	360.000€	Interview + Franchisor's white book (2018).
Ind.10	50.000€	Interview
Ind.11	64.000€	Interview
Ind.12	50.000€ + flat.	Interview

Sources: Interviews and Franchisor's white book, 2018.

The main difference found here is that hostelry franchising chains require €360.000 to start the activity, whereas KIBS show results below at € 100.000.

Job description.

To analyze it, we show our main results in the table (Appendix VI, Table 17). The quotes show that the description of work is not widely used in our cases. Even

some franchisors do not follow any job description. We believe it can be given due to the size of outlets and clinics (ten employees or less). Being small firms, the job description does not seem necessary in many companies. The only exception found was provided by the dental franchisee (F_{sor.5} and F_{see.7}), who established some guidelines that summarize their job with some levels of flexibility.

Manuals and protocols.

These two concepts are extremely related one each other. Both issues codify how the procedures must be done. The difference can rely on the source of information. On the one side, protocols come from society or well-recognized organizations. Their application goes independently of the company. On the other side, the manual of operations is a document to establish the procedures inside a company or an outlet (Benavides et al., 2008).

To analyze these codes, we asked our interviews about what activities are standardized or regulated by some procedure. As a result, we obtained two sub-codes, being the protocols and the manual of operations.

- The protocols.

Protocols are mainly used in dentistry. Especially dealing with critical tasks:

“Mainly orthodontics (is standardized), stick the brackets, put the wire, tighten it, put them on the palate, and well, everything is orthodontics.” (ExF_{see.8})

“With dentistry, it is not so difficult to diagnose. Everything in the mouth is well studied. However, with what you diagnose, there are always 3 or 4 types of treatments, and when you choose one, and there is always has a protocol”. (Ind.11)

However, we have seen some levels of flexibility, especially with physiotherapy companies: Although there are some protocols, the way of working is mainly based on previous experience:

“The osteopathy is made by the osteopath who comes here and who must know what technique to use. That is, there is no protocol. Yes, there are, but no one uses them. That is, you within your experience and the techniques you know you perform the actions you believe are more convenient for each problem. There we have the freedom to work”. (Ind.10)

We realized that all protocols only involve critical tasks, those only related to perform the activity itself. Related to auxiliary tasks, we have not found some results related to it. The closest results are written down on the manual of operations, only developed by the dentistry franchising chain (Fsee.7).

- Manual of operations.

Using this, companies establish those activities regulated by some procedures. This procedure only involves the company, and it is not possible to transfer to other companies.

“Here we have everything protocolized³⁴. Besides, if it is not done like this, well, dentists do their treatment according to their opinion, but everything around is protocolized (...). “Protocols there are many, mainly everything that entails clinical and business management, optimization of times and jobs, tasks of each job, economic management of the business, purchases, income, expenses, all this is protocolized (Fsor.5).

Knowledge-transfer mechanisms.

The manual of operations has not been applied for most of our cases. Instead, they use other, more tacit mechanisms of coordination. Being small firms, almost all cases solve their coordination verbally. Therefore, this code is oriented to know how do they acquire their knowledge and what mechanisms they use.

Some mechanisms can be better than others. Our cases have shown a huge plethora of knowledge transfer mechanisms. The interviewed have shown that the knowledge transferred mainly deals with critical tasks related to the activity. Nevertheless, we have some quotations related to the previous point of auxiliary tasks. Given the complexity to comment on all knowledge transfer mechanisms with the contents of it, we have decided to create a table to summarize this relation (Appendix VI, Table 18).

³⁴ Although the words of this interviewed, he refers “protocols” to talk about scheduled or previewed activities.

In this table, it is easy to see that our interviewed professional show more concern related to the critical tasks. In this sense, they use more mechanisms to acquire or retrain their knowledge. On the column related to auxiliary tasks, some cases show no concerning related to this kind of knowledge. Related to the mechanisms used, professionals prefer to use courses.

Besides, we have found an interesting finding here. Comparing traditional versus non-traditional franchising chains, we can see the manual of operations plays a different role according to their activity. From one side, L.G. (Fsr.3) uses their manual of operations (recipes on his case) to share the critical know-how (new dishes). On the other side, R.G. (Fsr.5) designed the manual to coordinate their franchisees' performance, more oriented to auxiliary tasks. The manual of operation denies the intervention on critical tasks:

“There is a protocol that says that we should not interfere in anything that the doctor says, which says that although knowing that the doctor is messing up, we should not go. Another thing is that if the doctor screwed up a lot, we would substitute him, but that would happen in any business or clinic”.

Completing this issue, some branding chains and PA have established some formal mechanisms to know their customers' point of view (feedback). Similar systems do not appear on independent entrepreneurs.

RELATIONAL CAPITAL (RC).

Once finished our codification and based on previous literature, our codes related to RC are agreements, the franchising (branding chains) relation, the professional association image, the competitiveness issues, the corporate social responsibilities, the feedback from customers, partners, and suppliers and the support from associated companies.

Agreements.

On the HC analysis of this chapter, we have seen some support provided by alliances and PA in terms of initial training related to auxiliary and critical tasks

(Kaufmann and Eroglu, 1999). In this section, we will discuss in-depth these consulting actions.

Using this code, we have analyzed how other companies or colleagues help the interviewed ones. As we have seen analyzing the institutional sources and the HC (especially on retraining issues), these companies do not operate isolated. We have seen these companies try to find synergies from other agents.

Professional associations.

Surprisingly, although their influence is based on one region or other, PA do not operate isolated. They subscribe to some agreements with other PA or with specialized schools (to develop auxiliary or critical tasks):

“With the PA of Madrid and Barcelona, we made a very powerful investment, and this is where we do... (he showed a private area of the web). We hire some services that allow us to connect from anywhere without having a VPN (...). We also usually see other types of training chains, either “Fisioformación” in Barcelona or “Istema” in Valencia that are powerful chains (...). Why? Because they had much more experience in materials, classrooms and so on. Then we use outside companies. We were looking for courses that value the concept of being associated (look for advantages of membership). (PA.1).

Despite this, the collaboration with schools or other organizations have not been well-received by some members:

“I am not inspired by such confidence (...). Now it seems that private clinics or they choose friendships”. (Ind.10)

In the optometry profession, most PA decided to join in a National general counsel of PA, in order to be more powerful. In this case, they have established some agreements with PA from other professions. In this case, establishing a social campaign:

“We have also made an agreement with the Spanish Association of Primary Care (doctors) and with the Spanish society of patients with diabetes to make a national campaign where the establishments of optometry can make a series of tests to determine who the more than 2,500.000 people sick of diabetics are”. (PA.2)

Branding companies.

Although PA do not consider associated companies as a source of threats, the emergence of these chains has had some impact on the dominant business models. The quotes cited in Table 9 (Appendix VI) illustrate that the appearing of branding chains made these activities more professionals, establishing some efficiency systems. However, there is a perception that their employees are recently graduated, and their experience is not the best.

From another point of view, we obtained some interesting findings related to the importance of agreements. In this sense, the retraining service quality was a key resource to continue the relationship between the entrepreneur (ExFsee.8) and the network he joined:

“We paid € 3000 a month for royalties, while others paid € 1000. Maybe already, I would have been interested in staying in the franchise (paying 1000€). Nevertheless, it was much money that they asked us for (...). In the end, we left because we learned a lot (at the beginning of the relation), but they did not give us much more. It is that we once learned a bit about how to function; they did not give us much more”.

We believe this quotation is extremely important. This entrepreneur learned how to manage all his weaknesses from the franchisor (as we have seen advertising, efficiency, or caring patients). At some moment of the relation, he was very disappointed by the difference between the royalties charged and the services they provide. This quote is supported by a theoretical paper provided by Navarro-Sanfeli and Puig (2018).

Competitiveness.

In the previous section, we have seen that competitiveness has been raised since the appearing of branding companies. This fact has created a new environment. In this vein, the PA work to develop a favorable position of their members:

“The PA has to ensure that there are more opportunities in public services, to tighten, to have a better treatment of our profession. Several aspects are the competence of the PA, but others do not. We can train, be a better professional, look for some oppositions that come out, the school can be a facilitator”. (PA.1)

Despite this, professionals have noticed a growth of competitiveness in their sector. The turbulence has risen in the last few years. Some arguments are given the number of graduated in recent years (*numerus clausus*). Following the open questions from quantitative analysis, this topic has been the most cited:

“If you do not control the factories of Dentists (Private Universities) with the two new ones in the Canary Islands, you will pay, and they will give you the title. Someone is giving much money to the state (franchises, private universities) ... Dentistry, I think it has days counted. They have become stores instead of dental clinics”. (Male odontologist, from Las Palmas, Canary Islands. Active since 1992).

“It seems that the Spanish PA is moving to end the misleading advertising of the franchises, but it would be necessary to limit the opening of more private universities and limit the number of dentists who graduate each year, as they are the fuel for the chains to continue to exist of which we complain so much.” (Male odontologist from Pontevedra, Galicia. Active since 2009).

“The commercialization of all professional activities has a special negative effect on dentistry, permeating the attitude and vision of the dentist. The state does not establish a clear, univocal, and democratic regulation to stop this trend and defend the interests of professionals and patients”. (Female odontologist from Las Palmas, Canary Islands. Active since 1986).

Besides, from our cases, we have found other important factors that increase the uncertainty:

“The insurance companies I think are the big lies. For example, when they tell you that they give you clean, they do not do it, because you are already paying a monthly or annual fee, let's say they come to charge you between € 40 and € 100 a month (...). The patient usually goes to the insurance because he is paying for it, and they give him a 10-minute cleaning badly done. What happens is that they have already captured the customer, they are left with that”. (Ind.11)

“Now, there is everything and many. Now some people have their postgraduate degrees, their career ... It is also true that now there are 3000 postgraduate degrees. There are many dentists. There are more professionals, but there are also more people who care about having a good smile. Keep in mind that before you went to the dentist only to remove teeth and little else. Not now. Now we are in a society where we have a beautiful smile”. (Ind.12)

After analyzing this growth on competitiveness, two news actors have emerged in our analysis. On the one side, the private universities that offer the title on dentistry and specialized post-graduate programs. On the other side, the insurance companies have offered some health services that are analyzed here (especially

physiotherapy and dentistry). Their impact has become the sector more competitive. These two new agents could be a source of further study.

Other codes

The RC is extremely widely dimension. On our analysis, we have found other codes less important than the agreements and the competitiveness but still remarkable:

A) Feedback from customers or members.

The associated companies and PA establish some mechanisms to know the quality of service they provide. First, the PA do some market research to know some concerns related to knowledge retraining:

“Yes, once we receive some request for training by some members, we do a small survey, and if there is enough demand, it is done. We are sensitive to the training demands of the collegiate (...). We do surveys regularly. For example, behind each act, we ask the opinion, we also put questions not related to the profession as they value the performance of the PA”. (PA.2).

Secondly, franchisors are also concerned about the service they provide:

“We do random surveys, and they are favorable, I have no complaints. It is also true that people who want to say something unfavorable, they do not say it in writing, then we take that into account”. (Fsor.4)

“We put some customer questionnaires in the clinics, to tell us that we can improve.”(Fsor.5)

This concern has not been tackled by independent entrepreneurs who have not established any formal system to know the quality of service. In this sense, PA could improve their performance by observing the service they provide. Related to this, the National Council of Dentistry has edited one white book³⁵ to understand the activity in Spain. Likewise, but without dealing with the same

³⁵ <http://www.consejodentistas.es/pdf/libros/libro-blanco/index.html>

depth, the Spanish council of optics and optometry publish a journal related to improving their members' performance in economic terms³⁶.

A. The influence of (knowledge) suppliers.

From one side, franchisors and PA share the knowledge in terms of one or two months, based on courses from agreements with other companies (suppliers and partners), journals, or magazines. On the other side, independent entrepreneurs try to acquire their knowledge through congresses (see Appendix VI, Table 15) or specialized courses, although the retraining is wider in terms of time. (Appendix VI, Table 19).

It takes our attention the quotation provided by A.M. (Fsor.4). This case considered that some knowledge of the Master's Degree is not useful for daily activities. As a result, they share only knowledge with some potential to be practiced by their professionals:

“Master's Degrees are very expensive in physiotherapy, but we provide training from them only to apply the knowledge. In this sense, we have agreements with other private companies with approved courses”.

In a similar way, R.G. (Fsor.5) and P.L. (Man.6) have designed a method to train their dentists from agreements with their suppliers (co-working. See Table 11 and Table 16, Appendix VI), who push their clients to accept their products through courses and sponsored retraining:

“Dentistry is an eminently private sector and operates a lot through providers (...). There are very powerful companies that sell their products, offer courses to educate the dentists to do things on their way. This occurs throughout the sector”. (Fsor.5)

These quotes go similarly to the other one provided by J.Q. (Ind.11). He talked about the capabilities of suppliers to teach how to use their new materials and techniques:

³⁶ <https://www.cgcoo.es/ediciones/febrero-2018>

“I will not do it but, I could work similarly for 30 years more, only retraining my knowledge from suppliers’ courses. They come to my clinic and show us new materials (...). They move much money”.

This affirmation is confirmed by R.G., (Fsor.5), who being on the other side of our scope, says similar things:

“If you want to run an outlet, you pay me a fee and some royalties, and I do everything. I look for licenses, authorizations, I do the work, I speak with suppliers, clinical installation, interviews, training staff, etc.”

After analyzing all this qualitative study, we obtained two groups of conclusions, each of them related to our two different perspectives.

Form the one side, related to the Institutional Influences, the coercive isomorphism is slightly developed just to ensure some levels of quality among practitioners; the mimetic isomorphism illustrated the emergence of many different business models on these activities such as franchising chains, bargain centers, co-operatives, or insurance companies. Finally, the normative isomorphism demonstrated some tacit requirements in terms of the activity itself (e.g.: additional training required or specialties), and the differences among who run the company (e.g.: social facilitators).

Form the other side, related to the Intellectual Capital perspective: the Human Capital highlighted the different treatment on critical and auxiliary tasks, and the way professionals retrain their skills; the Structural Capital analyzed the coordination mechanisms developed by ABM, and the absence of manual protocols on almost all cases. Finally, the Relational Capital observed the impact of PA and associated chains on KIBS.

4.3 The quantitative analysis. Results and discussion.

Truth tables yielded descriptive information about the presence or absence of each of the conditions on the possibility of the outcome. This section develops the analysis of sufficiency obtained. Below them, there are interpretations of results. Following Schneider and Eggert (2014), the understanding of the results of QCA came from up to three different sources of information have been taken into account to support or reject the results obtained in the different tests performed. These are a) contributions from the previous qualitative study, b) the review of prior literature, and c) complementary tests.

4.3.1 The effects of BM, activity and role in the perceived performance.

Hypothesis 1 was formulated in order to see if the BM, analyzed KIBS or roles were associated to superior performance. The following truth table shows that not any causal condition or a combination of them was associated to the outcome or its absence. Only the combination of ABM, in optometry or physiotherapy perceived by entrepreneurs (BM*~Activity*~Role) was slightly related to superior performance. However, the consistency was not high enough to be accepted (0,70) although shows some association. Other present combinations were far to be accepted.

Table 4.4: Truth table of categorical conditions and performance.

BM	Activity	Role	N	Performance	Raw consistency
1	0	0	7	0	0,70
0	0	1	7	0	0,56
0	1	0	36	0	0,54
0	1	1	6	0	0,50
1	1	1	2	0	0,48
1	0	1	7	0	0,45
0	0	0	13	0	0,38

Source: Own elaboration.

Complementarily, we also run a crosstab. Again, the Phi and Cramer's V obtained showed poor associations between these variables and superior performance:

Table 4.5: The relation of BM, activity and role in the perceived performance.

Causal conditions		Performance			~Performance			Total	
		Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected
BM	IBM	27	28,6	-0,9	35	33,4	0,9	62	62,0
	ABM	9	7,4	0,9	7	8,6	-0,9	16	16,0
	Total	36	36,0		42	42		78	78,0
Phi		0,10							
Cramer's V		0,10							
Activity	Optom. and Phys.	13	15,7	-1,2	21	18,3	1,2	34	34,0
	Dentistry	23	20,3	1,2	21	23,7	-1,2	44	44,0
	Total	36	36,0		42	42		78	78,0
Phi		0,14							
Cramer's V		0,14							
Role	Entrepreneurs	25	25,8	-0,4	31	30,2	0,4	56	56,0
	Employees	11	10,2	0,4	11	11,8	-0,4	22	22,0
	Total	36	36,0		42	42,0		78	78,0
Phi		0,05							
Cramer's V		0,05							

Source: Own elaboration.

Although the test does not obtained any significant data, the results illustrated that BM, activity and role are not related by themselves in obtaining superior performance. Therefore, hypothesis 1 cannot be accepted from our test: QCA and Crosstabs illustrated that there is not better a combination of BM, activity and role assumed oriented for obtaining superior performance.

The poor relevance of BM in superior performance exemplifies the growing trend of these activities. Whatever the BM entrepreneurs want to set up, the performance is quite high ($M = 5,11$; $SD = 0,85$). The lack of differences among BM is not surprising. We have found other articles in the same line (E.g.: Camisón and Villar-López, 2010). Related to the activity, differences neither appeared in obtaining superior performance. This fact is neither surprising. All activities are T-KIBS. In other words, the legal and education requirements are very similar, and in the end, same performance can be expected. Finally, differences in the role assumed are not related to superior performance. Therefore, the perception is quite homogenous among roles. A feasible explanation of this fact can be given that all cases were answered by active professionals operating in private health companies.

Far to be disappointed, the truth is that these results ensured that BM, activity or the role will not alter the results obtained from the IT and IC causal conditions. The following tests will show the BM configuration, and the performance of companies.

4.3.2 The configuration of the business model from institutional influences and intellectual capital perceived.

This section shows the results obtained for answering hypotheses 2 and 4, related to the BM configuration from institutional influences and intellectual capital management. The following table 4.6 illustrates the results obtained for the BM configuration from institutional and IC approaches:

Table 4.6: Analysis of sufficiency for BM configuration.

Outcome: ~BM (Independent Business Models)							
Path	P.A. Influences	Market Influences	HC Management	RC Marketing	Coverage		Consistency
					Raw	Unique	
1		○		○	0.41	0.13	0.92
2		○	●		0.37	0.10	0.90
3	○		●	○	0.26	0.06	0.85
Coverage Solution: 0.57							
Consistency solution: 0.88							
Outcome: BM (Associated Business Models)							
Path	P.A. Influences	Market Influences	HC Management	RC Marketing	Coverage		Consistency
					Raw	Unique	
1		●	○	○	0.18	0.04	0.19
2		○	○	●	0.11	0.01	0.14
3	●	●		○	0.17	0.03	0.22
Coverage Solution: 0.26							
Consistency solution: 0.20							
<p>A) Following Fiss (2011), core conditions (big circles) are those appearing in intermediate and parsimonious solutions. Small circles are peripheral conditions, because they only appear in intermediate solution. Black circles represent the presence of the condition, and white circles its absence.</p> <p>B) Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey.</p>							

Source: Own elaboration.

Three different combinations were obtained for establishing IBM. The model of all these combinations was consistent enough (0.88) and highly representative

(0.57). The most representative combination (13% of all cases) was the one where Market influences and RC are absent. The second one (10% of cases) push to improve their HC without being influenced by Market influences. The last one (6%) is configured by the presence of HC with the absence of RC and PA's influences. Therefore, we obtained the following formula:

$$\sim\text{Market}*\sim\text{RC} + \sim\text{Market}*\text{HC} + \sim\text{PA}*\text{HC}*\sim\text{RC} = \text{IBM}$$

For the ABM configuration, the analysis of sufficiency was not able to obtain enough consistency to accept the three combinations emerged (0.20). Therefore, the three combinations of conditions obtained were not valid to be accepted. Consequently, not any logical formula was obtained.

Interpreting the results, we can affirm that IBM is shaped in three different ways: Firstly, entrepreneurs under IBM reject the influence of suppliers and consumer trends and are not ready to establish loyalty and image policies. PA and HC stand out neither by their presence nor by their absence. We can assume this path is associated with the most conservative position. From Miles et al., (1978), this configuration is highly related to reactive behaviors given the rejection of adopting innovations from RC and considering that their activities are not influenced by market pressures (Moore, 2005).

Secondly, IBM is characterized by the absence of Market pressures in combination with a significant effort to improve their knowledge and experience in the profession. PA and RC are not relevant in this combination. We consider professionals who choose this path are also conservative but are interested in improving their knowledge related to the profession.

In the third combination, the HC is also essential, with the absence of PA influences and aggressive campaigns of loyalty and promotion. However, this path assumes that market pressures exist, but the attention towards these

dimensions is in the average. From Miles and Snow typology (1978), this path has some features related to analytic behavior: They recognize the importance of market pressures, not avoiding them. The retraining and improvement of their skills are crucial assets for their activity. Besides, they are very critic with the role of PA influence, denying a positive impact from such organizations. Similarly, loyalty and reputation actions are also rejected.

In summary, three out of four causal conditions are relevant in the IBM configuration. The absence of market pressures and RC are connected in two out of three conditions. Besides, the presence of HC is also shown in two paths. Additionally, we developed crosstabs to analyze the previous argument (Table 4.7). The results confirm our findings. Although only market pressures are significantly related to the BM choice (Sig = 0,01), the HC (0,18) and the RC (0,14) is also slightly related.

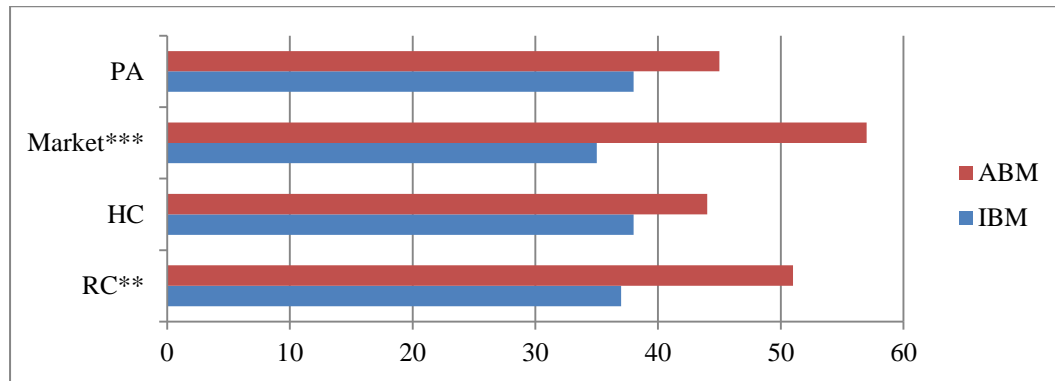
Table 4.7: Crosstabs of BM and causal conditions.

Condition (Low, medium and high values)		Low values			Medium values			High values			Total	
		Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected
PA Influences (≤ 3 ; 4-5; ≥ 6)	IBM	25	23,8	0,7	14	14,3	-0,2	23	23,8	-0,5	62	62
	ABM	5	6,2	-0,7	4	3,7	0,2	7	6,2	0,5	16	16
	Total	30	30		18	18		30	30		78	78
Phi		0,08										
Cramer's V		0,08										
Market pressures ($\leq 3,67$; 4 – 4,67; ≥ 5)	IBM	24	19,9	2,5	15	14,3	0,5	23	27,8	-2,7	62	62
	ABM	1	5,1	-2,5	3	3,7	-0,5	12	7,2	2,7	16	16
	Total	25	25		18	18		35	35		78	78
Phi		0,33***										
Cramer's V		0,33***										
HC Management	IBM	26	24,6	0,8	23	21,5	0,9	13	15,9	-1,9	62	62
	ABM	5	6,4	-0,8	4	5,5	-0,9	7	4,1	1,9	16	16
	Total	31	31		27	27		20	20		78	78
Phi		0,21										
Cramer's V		0,21										
RC Marketing	IBM	23	20,7	1,4	17	15,9	0,7	22	25,4	-2,0	62	62
	ABM	3	5,3	-1,4	3	4,1	-0,7	10	6,6	2,0	16	16
	Total	26	26		20	20		32	32		78	78
Phi		0,22										
Cramer's V		0,22										

Source: Own elaboration.

Additionally, U Mann-Whitney non-parametric test was also developed (Figure 4.4). The results highlight the differences in the perception of Market pressures and RC. Compared to the ABM, IBM perceive less intensity in both causal conditions, being these differences also significant.

Figure 4.4: External and internal perceptions according to the business model.



Source: Own elaboration.

Following our results, we can accept that the absence of market influences is a sufficient condition in two out of three combinations for IBM configurations. It can be affirmed that this BM is established when its entrepreneurs have little awareness of their competitive environment. That is, the business configuration is based on other motivations, paying little attention to the pressures from environment. Similarly, the absence of policies to improve the RC is a sufficient condition in two out of three combinations. Therefore, it is feasible to assume that entrepreneurs under IBM are not very aware of improving their reputation, image, or to obtain loyal patients. A lack of relationships between suppliers and market trends perceived by their owners are also significant. A reason for this is the vast number of tasks and obligations these entrepreneurs must face, in terms of bureaucracy issues, organizing their clinic, and developing his/her profession, having less time for other tasks. Finally, the HC was present again; it two out of three conditions. This condition represents the importance of IBM to develop their skills and abilities in the profession.

From the qualitative study, some related arguments that support our findings were found. For example, J.Q. (Ind.11):

“(...) Our idea was to work with our clinic without knowing if it was a good moment, but we threw ourselves into the river (we took risks). An opportunity arose, and we took a chance. We believe that we are not deceived. Today I can think that we are not deceived. ”

Despite this statement, it would be a mistake to consider that IBM is not aware of competitors, consumer trends, and dealer recommendations. The previous case and others such as P.Y. (Ind.10) or R.O (Ind.11) are aware of the current situation of their professions. :

“It has become more aggressive in the sense that more offers are shown, in working with prices, it is what I think. They say “implants for so many €” yes, I see that sometimes it is treated with financing offers.” (Ind.11).

Related to the conditions from the IC, We detected a very low intensity of RC. IBM do not invest in improving the relationship with their suppliers and patients. However, this is not true. The main difference is how they do it. Some informal mechanisms have been detected in IBM. For example, the case of R.O. It is an example of a poorly structured RC:

“(...) we work a lot with word of mouth. Although we have the website to improve it, I do not have time. To put ourselves to be able to finish the web, because I have not put myself. We work mostly by word of mouth. ”

On the other hand, the ABM use with more intensity other mechanisms to obtain information of a much more structured nature:

“(...) we do surveys randomly, and they are favorable, I have no complaints. It is also true that people who want to say something unfavorable do not say it in writing, so we take that into account. ”(Fsee. 4).

Finally, in terms of HC, high motivation to improve it was observed. In our qualitative study, all cases were aware of this topic, showing different strategies for updating their knowledge in the profession. However, as it was discussed in section 4.2.2, differences appeared in terms of sources for obtaining the HC, the quality, the utility, and the frequency.

Despite all the previous analyses, it has not been verified that any BM has advantages to obtain some superior performance. However, if the presence or absence of any condition from both institutions and IC is related to it, some BM may be in a weaker position. Therefore, other sufficiency test will be developed.

4.3.3 Institutional influences, intellectual capital perceived, and its impact on the performance of companies.

The last analysis studies the level of association between the two theoretical approaches used and their relationship with the performance perceived.. The results of models are very close to being accepted for the outcome (Performance = 0.77) and its absence (\sim Performance consistency = 0.77), also obtaining high levels of coverage (0.61 and 0.63 respectively).

Table 4.8: Analysis of sufficiency for performance.

Outcome: PERFORMANCE								
Path	BM	PA	Market	HC Management	RC Marketing	Coverage		Consistency
						Raw	Unique	
1			●	●	●	0.48	0.13	0.80
2		○	●		●	0.37	0.08	0.78
3	●	○	●	●		0.08	0.03	0.78
4	●	●		●	●	0.13	0.02	0.82
Coverage Solution: 0.61 Consistency solution: 0.77								
Outcome: \simPERFORMANCE								
Path	BM	PA	Market	HC Management	RC Marketing	Coverage		Consistency
						Raw	Unique	
1	○	●	○		○	0.29	0.14	0.80
2	●	○	●		●	0.11	0.11	0.86
3	○	○		●	○	0.35	0.08	0.80
4	○	○	○	●		0.30	0.04	0.75
Coverage Solution: 0.63 Consistency solution: 0.77								
<p>A) Following Fiss (2011), core conditions (big circles) are those appearing in intermediate and parsimonious solutions. Small circles are peripheral conditions, because they only appear in intermediate solution. Black circles represent the presence of the condition, and white circles its absence.</p> <p>B) Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey.</p>								

Source: Own elaboration.

Analyzing the results for the outcome (Performance), four different combinations emerged. The most representative one is where the Market pressures, HC, and RC are present (13% of cases). In the second one (8%), the market pressures and RC are also present, but the absence of PA pressures is also essential. Thirdly, and less important (3%), ABM, market pressures, HC and the lack of PA pressures are also related to positive performance perceived. Finally, (2%), the ABM, the absence of PA influence with the presence of HC, and RC are also associated with a positive performance. As a result, the formula related to superior performance obtained is:

$$\underline{\text{Market*HC*RC}} + \underline{\text{Market*RC*~PA}} + \underline{\text{BM*Market*HC*~PA}} + \underline{\text{BM*~PA*HC*RC}} = \text{PERFORMANCE}$$

For the absence of the outcome (~Performance), four combinations were obtained. All of them are characterized by the absence of many conditions, instead of the presence of them. The most representative one (14% of cases) represents the influence of PA and denying all the other causal conditions. In the third most representative combination, only the HC is present, but BM, PA, and RC are absent. The fourth one is very similar to the previous one: the HC is present, and BM, PA, and Market pressures are absent. The only exception is the second most representative combination (11%), where the BM, Market, and RC are present, but the PA is absent. Therefore, we obtained the following formula:

$$\underline{\sim\text{BM*PA*~Market*~RC}} + \underline{\text{BM*~PA*Market*RC}} + \underline{\sim\text{BM*~PA*HC*RC}} + \underline{\sim\text{BM*~PA*~Market*HC}} = \sim\text{PERFORMANCE}$$

However, given the consistency values of both models (Performance and ~Performance), blurred lines of QCA appeared to be accepted or rejected. Further tests will be necessary. U Mann-Whitney non-parametric test and crosstabs have also been developed.

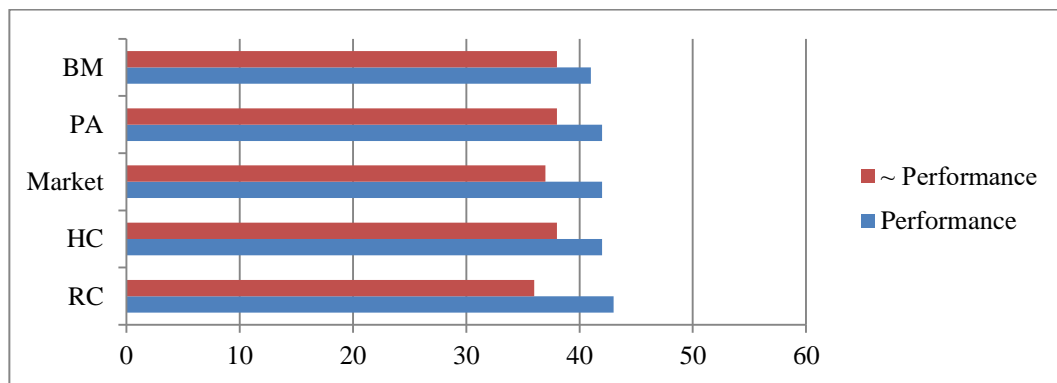
First, we run a crosstab analyzing the four causal conditions proposed adding the BM categorical condition. (Table 4.9). The results were not significant at any single condition. A possible reason is the plethora of existing combinations oriented to superior performance. Putting all together in the crosstabs, not any single causal condition was able to explain a superior performance.

The analysis of performance continued by the U Mann-Withney non-parametric test. (Figure 4.6). The results were quite poor on our data. Only the RC showed differences between those companies that obtain a better performance compared to those that do not do it. However, the results were far to be accepted. I believe this is because of the same problem of crosstabs: The neutralization of conditions among different combinations.

Table 4.9: Crosstabs of performance and causal conditions.

Causal conditions (Low, medium and high values)		Low values			Medium values			High values			Total	
		Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected	Corrected	Counted	Expected
PA Influences (≤ 3; 4-5; ≥ 6)	~PERFOR	18	16,2	0,9	9	9,7	-0,4	15	16,2	-0,5	42	42
	PERFOR	12	13,8	-0,9	9	8,3	0,4	15	13,8	0,5	36	36
	Total	30	30		18	18		30	30		78	78
Phi		0,1										
Cramer's V		0,1										
Market pressures (≤ 3,67; 4 – 4,67; ≥5)	~PERFOR	16	13,5	1,2	9	9,7	-0,4	17	18,8	-0,8	42	42
	PERFOR	9	11,5	-1,2	9	8,3	0,4	18	16,2	0,8	36	36
	Total	25	25		18	18		35	35		78	78
Phi		0,14										
Cramer's V		0,14										
HC Management	~PERFOR	18	16,7	0,6	15	14,5	0,2	9	10,8	-0,9	42	42
	PERFOR	13	14,3	-0,6	12	12,5	-0,2	11	9,2	0,9	36	36
	Total	31	31		27	27		20	20		78	78
Phi		0,11										
Cramer's V		0,11										
RC and Marketing	~PERFOR	16	14	1,0	12	10,8	0,6	14	17,2	-1,5	42	42
	PERFOR	10	12	-1,0	8	9,2	-0,6	18	14,8	1,5	36	36
	Total	26	26		20	20		32	32		78	78
Phi		0,17										
Cramer's V		0,17										
		IBM			ABM			Total				
BM	~PERFOR	35	33,4	0,9	7	8,6	-0,9	42		42		
	PERFOR	27	28,6	-0,9	9	7,4	0,9	36		36		
	Total	62	62		16	16		78		78		
Phi		0,1										
Cramer's V		0,1										

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 4.5: Causal conditions and performance.

Source: Own elaboration.

The discussion of results will be separated into two parts. First, we will discuss those obtained for the tests developed to achieve superior performance. Later, we will show those related to not to do it.

In terms of obtaining a superior performance, three dimensions are very much more important than the others. Market influences, HC, and RC, are very present in almost all success combinations.

Market influences were detected as a relevant dimension in the qualitative study. Many cases were worried about the importance of this dimension is taking. All these quotes were supported by prior related literature such as Zhu et al. (2012) or Brandt and Znotka (2019):

“The sector was very unprofessional: every dentist going to war on his own, many dentists were very unprofessional and practiced a certain picaresque. (...) It was Vitaldent (Franchising company) who set some guidelines for the professionalization of the sector; of universalization. He has lowered the clinics to the ground floor and has put financial tools. Now all have it”. (Fsor.5)

“It (the activity) has recently entered a vortex of brutal mercantilism in which the most important thing is to find the discount and final price of the product for the final customer.” (Man.6)

The HC was probably the most critical condition related to superior performance. The importance of this dimension can also be seen in combinations associated with not superior performance perceived (~Performance). I can interpret this a sign of how this dimension is developed in the professions. The HC was studied in the qualitative study in depth. The cases showed their interest in improving it in

terms of critical knowledge improvement (through congresses, webinars, courses, etc.), showing high rates of knowledge retraining, and betting for specialties in the profession. From literature, many articles also illustrate this relation (e.g.: Sharabati et al., 2010; Lai et al., 2017).

Finally, the RC was the less improved condition ($M = 4,79$), but one of the most related to superior performance. This dimension was also present in three out of four combinations associated with the outcome. Although in the quantitative study was understood as loyalty from customers and reputation, the qualitative one was able to enlarge this concept. For example, ExFsee.8 showed the benefits obtained for belonging to ABM, in terms of organization, reputation, and synergies (see section 4.2.2). Besides, I found some interesting papers supporting our findings (e.g.: Welbourne and Pardo-del-Val, 2009; Kianto et al., 2010).

Discussing the results for not obtaining a superior performance (\sim Performance), all these combinations are more related to the absence of some conditions instead of the presence of them. Analyzing the conditions one by one, the PA was absent in three out of four combinations related to the absence of the outcome; the market pressures and the RC were also absent in two paths. Only the HC was always consistent, being present in two combinations or non-absent in the other two.

Studying the combinations one by one, it is easy to observe that all combinations not related to a superior performance put their efforts attending only one dimension. In my opinion, these findings say the attention to one single condition is not enough for obtaining superior performance if the others are avoided. Successful companies must develop contingent strategies, being able to be aware of all interesting sources of competitive advantages.

4.4 Conclusions.

The present chapter has introduced the main findings obtained in qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative study illustrated how all these companies are affected by their closest environment. The main result was obtained from the mimetic isomorphism, where all cases agreed their profession is changing, being more uncertain. Normative isomorphism was applied through the tacit demands for some specialties levels among practitioners, primarily through PA, who bet for such influence instead of using coercive ones, who is rejected the most as possible.

Related to the Intellectual Capital theory, it was observed that HC was perceived differently in the BM configurations. Whereas IBM bet to train their workers inside the clinic, ABM is more oriented to obtain their specific labor market skills. Besides, in terms of knowledge acquisition, IBM is more oriented to satisfy their professional curiosity (through conferences and congresses), whereas ABM relies upon their retraining from suppliers and other partners. Finally, it was observed the different ways IBM and ABM develop their activity. Meanwhile, IBM entrepreneurs bear all tasks related to the entrepreneurial behavior, ABM split these responsibilities among the network and hired employees, creating synergies where this BM takes advantage.

The second part of this chapter showed the main results from the quantitative analysis. Using the QCA technique, three tests were run. They were developed combining with non-parametric tests, literature review, and findings from the qualitative study.

The first part analyzed the association (independence) among BM, KIBS, and roles towards superior performance. The results illustrated that none of these categorical conditions were related to it.

The second analysis of sufficiency illustrated the relation between BM configurations and IT and IC causal conditions. The test was able to establish why IBM is configured. The absence of market influences and RC, with HC's

presence, was common in the combinations obtained. Therefore, it is feasible to think that the entrepreneurs who create IBM are looking for knowledge improvement interests, not for economic ones. The growing trend of these activities is not very important to such professionals.

The third tests focus on terms of performance, the QCA analyzed those companies with a superior performance perceived, and those are not. Firstly, in general terms, the presence of Market influences, HC and RC, is associated with outstanding performance. However, the attention to PA influences and the BM showed different results, is less critical for obtaining such success in the companies. Secondly, analyzing those companies not able to get superior performance, we evidenced that the absence of conditions is associated with these poor results.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.

5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH.

The present thesis studied Spanish companies in private health services (PHS), specifically dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy, their perceptions regarding the performance obtained, and its determinants.

PHS were investigated owing to all the changes that have appeared in such activities, the unique features of such activities and the current lack of empirical research from the management perspective, all of which make it attractive for research. First, it was observed that the traditional way of working, mainly vocational, was changing into a more business-oriented way. New entrepreneurs were able to identify many new opportunities. Consequently, some unprecedented measures were implemented to obtain more efficient companies, such as better marketing campaigns, search for synergies, and higher profitability from available resources.

These changes call into question the professional environment's regulatory bodies and the impact of new business models (BMs). Therefore, this thesis approaches the role developed by the Professional Associations (PAs) and their functions. In addition, other organizations have recently appeared in the environment in the form of associated clinic chains. They have achieved some influence in their respective professions, emerging as reference model for the rest of the professional community.

From another perspective, these new entrepreneurs have also introduced substantial changes in terms of management and skills acquisition. Previously unknown knowledge has been implemented to search for better efficiency, synergies, and patient loyalty policies. Therefore, the primary purpose of this work is defined as follows:

To study the business model effect on small private health service companies' activity and analyze institutions' and intellectual capital's role in their performance.

To do this, the present dissertation has analyzed opinions from crucial informants (owners and workers) who develop their profession in dentistry, optometry, and physiotherapy small private clinics, with nine or fewer employees. This provides a valuable contribution to academic study: First, all cases are professional knowledge-intensive business services (P-KIBS) companies, which have traditionally been omitted by researchers of knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) (Freel, 2006; Davies and McMaster, 2015). Second, small companies like those studied here are complicated to analyze due to the intricacy of their activities, access to them, and the lack of databases (Gurău and Ranchhod, 2020).

To overcome such limitations, and to obtain a complete view of this phenomenon, a qualitative-quantitative mixed-methodology was designed. In summary, this research is an investigation of entrepreneurs in Spanish companies in a small range of small-sized KIBS, considering the reasons for the work objectives, the sample's limitations, and the importance of the context analyzed.

This research's broader conclusion confirms these activities are in a period of change in the organizational and strategic areas. Several BMs coexist such as franchising chains, cooperatives, and bargain centers, most of which obtain excellent performance in comparison with prior traditional independent clinics. This situation has led to the revitalization of PHS by introducing corporate decisions that optimize these small companies' production process.

The analysis of such services was carried out from institutional and intellectual capital theories:

- Institutional theory was adopted due to the conservative environment in which PHS are developed. The high entry barriers in terms of training, specific equipment, and the qualification requirements established by PAs are attractive arguments for using institutional theory. Additionally, the incorporation of franchise chains, cooperatives, bargain centers, and insurance companies in these activities added many organizational innovations, raising the reputation levels.
- Intellectual capital theory was selected owing to the high training requirements and specialization of the machinery used to support knowledge theories. Although this theory has some limitations in terms of implementation, we consider that the dimensions of the conceptual framework are a broad canvas to study PHS professionals' perceptions. More specifically:
 - Human capital is an essential resource in PHS. The high level training required to run these services, the value of experience, and continuous professional development justify this theory's use.
 - The structural capital of these companies is also high. Beyond the management of patient data, and coordination among clinic workers, these activities require manipulating highly sophisticated equipment, which requires a lot of skill to operate and interpret.
 - The relational capital of these companies is based on the relationships among professionals and their respective PAs. However, with the appearance of ABMs, formal networks were established through different types of alliances, introducing many organizational and relational improvements.

In summary, both theories were implemented in the two methodological approaches. This fact has allowed us to analyze the link between environmental pressures, the training and experience in the profession, the configuration of the BM, and the perception of better performance.

5.1 Main findings.

5.1.1 Qualitative study.

The present research has made it possible to study in depth the closest environment of entrepreneurs in PHS. This methodology analyzed PA and other public institutions' institutional effects and the leading market references for PHS. Twelve cases were studied, comprising managers from different services. With this, it was possible to answer the second research question (*For entrepreneurs who provide KIBS, how does the BM affect the perception of institutional influences?*). The findings were various:

- Coercive pressures are executed mainly positively through requirements to exercise the profession (e.g., Bachelor's Degree) or required bureaucracy (permissions). Negative actions (fines or punishments) are avoided as much as possible, although they occasionally occur.
- Public organizations mainly develop normative pressures in terms of rewards and promotions. When professionals follow these institutions' recommendations, they usually receive social facilitators (financial aid), reputation, and recognized training.
- Mimetic pressures usually come from the most innovative cases (franchising chains, cooperatives, and bargain centers). Being in a period of growth, these companies are able to identify many new opportunities. Therefore, business and management knowledge is becoming more important in these companies.

In addition, the study of intellectual capital through in-depth interviews allowed us to analyze the organization's intangible resources as one of their most valuable assets. These findings answer the third research question (*For entrepreneurs who provide KIBS, how does the BM affect the management of intellectual capital?*):

- Human capital: Training and continuous learning, as well as experience, are key contributors in these activities. Although extensive, initial training is not sufficient to carry out these professions at the levels recommended by the professional community. For this reason, continuous training is advocated and the need to specialize in a particular field of their respective professions.
- Structural capital: In terms of coordination mechanisms, production systems are essential, given the size of companies. Communication channels are direct between workers and entrepreneurs. However, when analyzing the tools, and computer and other equipment, the investment is very high due to these devices' sophistication.
- Relational capital: In this dimension, there were many contributing factors: a) some of the case managers are quite skeptical about the benefits of the assistance provided by the PA they belong to, being a limitation; b) ABMs are intensive in establishing synergies between the skills of the professionals of the associated clinics, and sharing the most expensive machinery; c) they also performed better, obtaining information from their patients to improve the production process; and d) much dissatisfaction was perceived from other agents such as the performance of private universities and insurance companies.

After having answered the second and third research questions, the main question posed can be answered (*In small companies that provide private health services, is there a better business model?*):

It can be said that each BM has its weaknesses and strengths, but no BM is better than another. The improvements due to innovations arising from ABMs are reduced by the associated costs and the clinics' size (mainly small companies). Consequently, they are still sufficiently successful independent BMs.

5.1.2 Quantitative study.

Data collected via the questionnaire was analyzed using a sample of 78 Spanish PHS small companies. Several issues were controlled for, such as the location, subsector, and the age of the company. There were two outcomes: the BM implemented (independent or associated) and the perceived performance. Following previous literature and objectives, we established certain conditions related to the companies' environment and intellectual capital.

To test the analyses, both the QCA technique and other non-parametric tests were used (cross tables and Mann-Whitney U). The results corroborated the findings of previous studies highlighted in the literature review, especially the information obtained from the previous qualitative analysis, and the responses to the open questions included in the questionnaire.

In the first place, and as a general conclusion, it can be stated that the BM, the analyzed activity, and the role do not directly affect the perception of better performance. Therefore, the first hypothesis was rejected. Next, the effect of influences from the environment (PA and referent companies) and intangible resources' organization (human and relational capital) were studied both in the configuration of the BM (hypotheses 2 and 4) and the companies' perceived performance (3 and 5). The following table summarizes the results:

Table 5.1: Main results.

Hypothesis	Causal conditions	Outcome	Result
1	Activity, BM and Role	Performance	It is not accepted
2	Institucional influences (PA and Markets)	BM	The QCA showed some IBM configurations.
4	Intellectual capital (HC and RC)		
3	Institucional influences (PA and Markets)	Performance	The tests obtained some useful combinations for getting superior performance.
5	Intellectual capital (HC and RC)		

Source: Own elaboration.

The results suggest that independent BMs are mainly characterized by the absence of market influences and relational capital, together with a very high human

capital investment. Regarding the performance analysis, the combined attention to these three dimensions (market trends, human capital, and relational capital) are the three key success factors for obtaining superior performance. In short, although ABMs do not achieve better performance by themselves, they have introduced some key elements: investment and renewal of knowledge, skills, and experience, which were already essential components in the strategy of these companies. Others have been newly incorporated successfully, such as the managerial knowledge, improvement of relations with customers and suppliers, and considerable attention to consumer trends.

5.2 Limitations.

All investigations have weaknesses, and this thesis is no exception. The primary limitations can be grouped into a) terminological definitions, b) statistical methodology, and c) the size of the sample.

First, there may be discrepancies in the definitions of BMs. Some authors defined them as systems or business forms (López and Ventura, 2001), or hybrid structures (Ménard, 2011). However, it is also true that the associated chains studied in this thesis meet all the requirements proposed by Chesbrough (2010) on what functions all BMs should achieve. In addition, there are also precedents in the grouping of BMs proposed in this work. For example, Pérez-Serrabona González has already tagged all of these formulas as associative forms, among which are “*collective warehouses of independent retailers, bargain centers, retail cooperatives, voluntary chains, contractual affiliation, concession or pyramid sale*” (2014: 66-67). It should be added that the independent-associated BM dichotomy is a recognized classification in the research of SMEs (Camisón et al., 2010) and allows us to capture the evolution in these companies' management systems to measure its effect.

Second, the choice of QCA as the primary statistical technique entails a series of limitations that must be considered. This technique was applied due to non-compliance with the data parametricity requirements. This fact represents an inevitable impoverishment of the results. Nevertheless, QCA offers some advantages. It can detect the most relevant cases and the most significant patterns (Legewie, 2013). Also, it can provide much more comprehensive results than non-parametric techniques (Pajunen, 2008). Here, this technique allowed the present work to establish combinations by which the proposed outcomes were obtained. This is undoubtedly beneficial for PHS professionals, who, instead of showing results highlighting some of the critical variables, QCA obtains synergies with more complete solutions and more significant guarantees.

Third, the sample of clinics analyzed may seem insufficient. Although the number of clinics studied is ideal for implementing the QCA technique, it only represents a small percentage of Spain's PHS clinics.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH.

It is necessary to emphasize that, although this Doctoral Thesis has attempted to address the situation of the PHS completely, we also note that there have been some aspects that could not be studied due to economic and temporal limitations. This recognition represents an opportunity for future research.

First, we have shown that knowledge transfer is an exceptional theoretical framework for studying this type of business. Therefore, given their characteristics, it is essential to understand how ABMs coordinate to improve their clinics' efficiency.

Second, given the high value that practitioners in these activities add to clinic networks as a whole, property rights theory could provide interesting evidence, especially in the analyses of clinic networks. Furthermore, analyzing this phenomenon from agency theory would make it possible to understand and predict some of the main problems these clinics may face compared to challenges assumed by independent BMs.

Third, the research conducted in this work obtained results based on respondents' perceptions and those from a previous qualitative study. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain less subjective results, such as obtaining them from databases to contrast these results. In short, all these aspects could be addressed with more ambitious research that addresses a more significant number of companies, the inclusion of other study variables, and their complementation with other financial indicators (Gurău and Ranchhod, 2020).

Regarding the temporal scope, we must take into account two essential aspects. On the one hand, the analysis was cross-sectional, which implies that we studied a sample at a given moment in time. Thus, there is doubt whether those results would be the same if the moment of data collection had been different. On the other hand, at the time of completing this Doctoral Thesis, we are still immersed in a scenario marked by the Covid-19 pandemic. Important questions emerge from this that can guide fruitful lines of future research. For example, given that

most of the companies that provide PHS are micro-enterprises characterized by a high level of financial fragility (Bartik et al., 2020), what will be their mortality rate compared to others of greater size? From the perspective of entrepreneurship, we can also ask ourselves how the Covid-19 pandemic is going to influence PHS, or as Ratten (2020) points out, what study opportunities will arise from this situation.

In short, everything seems to indicate that, given the health and safety nature of these sectors, changes will occur, and that these changes will be related to the regulatory and competitive areas. To address the former, theories based on BMs can guide research to respond to the necessary organizational adjustments. Concerning the competitive environment, intellectual capital theory and dynamic capabilities theory would explain the uneven effect of this new scenario on companies' performance.

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APPENDICES

7. APPENDICES.

Appendix I. Qualitative research protocol.

The research protocol aims to cover two critical aspects before conducting the investigation. The first is to determine what will be the research to be carried out. The protocol will prepare the research to keep the focus and to solve some problems. In the end, it will help us to answer the questions we have proposed, which are:

Research question 1: For small firms operating in KIBS, is there any better business model?

Research Question 2: For entrepreneurs operating in KIBS, how does the business model affect the perception of institutional influences?

Research question 3: For entrepreneurs operating in KIBS, how does the business model influence intellectual capital investment and management?

The second objective of this protocol is to inform the subjects investigated what is the purpose of it, seeking co-operation and transparency throughout the process. Therefore, a protocol must address some issues before starting the research.

Research philosophy used and research approach.

To be rigorous in our qualitative study, we have to focus on our methodology. In this sense, it is essential to consider the philosophy related to our research. Following Saunders and Lewis., *“The research philosophy you adopt contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world”* (2009:138). These authors illustrate the most important philosophies to do the research (Epistemologism, positivism, realism, interpretivism, and axiologism).

In this research, we believe the interpretivism is the most appropriate one to use it. The unit of analysis (PHS) and their reality support this philosophy. Following Saunders and Lewis. (2009), the interpretivism philosophy is characterized by being a social construct that may change. Finally, to concentrate on our professionals’ feelings, we will develop a small number of cases with in-depth interviews.

Secondly, there is a necessity to establish what approach we will use to develop qualitative research. In this case, we will use a deductive approach to understand the phenomena. This feature is given a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods in our study.

Case study introduction and purpose of the protocol.

In the editorial article written by Rynes and Gephart (2004), they considered that case studies should be done with qualitative methodology using various analytical techniques. In our case, we have established three analysis techniques: a) interviews, b) observation of established routines, and c) public documentation of the cases studied.

- **Conducting interviews.** Initially, the interviews will be semi-structured. We will interview all cases. Besides, each of them will be long-lasting, seeking trust with the partner interviewed, and other relevant aspects. We do not rule out the possibility of repeating different interviews for the same cases, as there is the possibility that several cases require several

visits to generate the climate of confidence necessary to obtain the required information. Later we will conduct using other relevant information from other sources outside the company.

- **Observation of routines and organizational culture.** One of the critical points of the ABM is the necessity to standardize the production processes (we can see examples in franchising such as Cox and Mason, 2007; Pardo del Val et al., 2014. Kaufmann and Eroglu, 1999). We consider it interesting to see the level of standardization within the same sector.
- **Procedures for obtaining data.** The interview and observation can be weak methods to obtain the data mainly because they are entirely related to the cases. To improve and triangulate some information, we will take into account information from other sources of information such as journals, sector reports, or press releases.

It should be added that all actions taken will vary depending on the case, and may vary between them. Table 7.1 summarizes all cases:

Table A 7.1: Cases and plan designed.

Role	Name ³⁷	Activity	Location	Plan
Pilot cases	L.G.	1	Madrid	- Develop important questions for the research
				• Operative questions refinement
				- Prepare specific documents to do interviews.
				- Prepare relevant questions for the study
Pilot cases	M.N.	1	Valencia	- Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Preparation time + research: 1st year.
				- Develop important questions for the research
				• Second operative questions refinement
Franchisor/manager	A.M.	2	Valencia	- Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review).
				- Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Case study: 2nd year
				- Apply the final script with operative questions
Franchisor/manager	R.G.	4	Sevilla	• Questions adapted to the profile (Franchisor/manager)
				- Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review).
				- Analyze impressions from other interviews

³⁷ On some cases, I only write down the initial letters because some interviewed asked me to be anonymous.

Franchisee/associated				Case study: 2nd year
	P.L.	3	Valencia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the final script with operative questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions adapted to the profile (Franchisor/manager) - Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review). - Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Case study: 2nd year
	M.G.	4	Albacete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the final script with operative questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions adapted to the profile (associated entrepreneur) - Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review). - Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Case study: 2nd year
	J.C.	4	Gandía (VLC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the final script with operative questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions adapted to the profile (associated entrepreneur) - Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review). - Analyze impressions from other interviews
Independent entrepreneur				Case study: 2nd year
	P.Y.	2	Valencia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the final script with operative questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions adapted to the profile (independent entrepreneur) - Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review). - Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Case study: 2nd year
	J.Q.	4	Valencia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the final script with operative questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions adapted to the profile (independent entrepreneur) - Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review). - Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Case study: 2nd year
	R.O.	4	Valencia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the final script with operative questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions adapted to the profile (independent entrepreneur) - Prepare specific documents to do interviews (Websites and literature review). - Analyze impressions from other interviews
				Case study: 2nd year
Activity: 1= Hostelry; 2= Physiotherapy; 3= Optometry; 4=Dentistry				

Source: Own elaboration.

The previous table can summarize the roles and activities understudy in this qualitative analysis. We aimed to get at least two cases related to all of the roles analyzed and performing their activity on all of our three activities under study. In this sense, we fulfilled this objective even on our case controls obtaining two cases related to the hostelry.

As noted above, the selected cases should have some requirements to be included: The cases operate under some BM of interest, associated or independent, on KIBS. Another important aspect is that the units of analysis should be located in the city of Valencia. Given the impossibility of obtaining all cases from Valencia,

we decided to expand our study to the rest of the Spanish cities. The third requirement is to obtain documentary information about the sectors studied. Finally, this table specifies what will be done in each case.

First, through an interview with the pilot case, we see what the main concerns of entrepreneurs in this type of industry are. From there, we will extract valuable to make relevant questions for this study.

Secondly, we need to obtain information from the cases to improve the quality of research, providing greater rigor, contrasting alternative information to the information received during the interviews (Rynes and Gephart, 2004). Therefore, there is a requirement to obtain information from other sources not related to the cases. This decision is developed to provide further validity to interviews and detect those that are unreliable. With this measure, there is a possibility to obtain contradictory information. To solve this problem, the triangulation will be present through all the qualitative research.

Finally, the study period may vary depending on the cases. We hope that in the pilot case, we will conduct a series of preparatory interviews, studies, and information received by the other sources.

Once we had done the interviews with entrepreneurs and partners from the cases, we need to contrast this information, not only using documents and databases. We believe the institutional influence plays an essential role in these sectors. For that, we have prepared a protocol to interview PA agents. These protocols are shown in Table 7.2.

Table A 7.2: Professional associations' research protocol.

Professional association	Interviewers	Triangulation	Work to do in cases
Ilustre Colegio de ópticos optometristas de la Comunidad Valenciana (COOCV)	J.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own financial documents and memories - Journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop essential questions for the research o About the situation of the activity o The conflictivity in the activity with new business models o Actions developed to fight against new business models. o Use of legal authority o The protection of partners and members o The scope of the college o Knowledge sharing o Members' obligations and requirements - Analyze impressions from other interviews
Consejo Nacional de Ópticos y Optometristas (CNOO)	J.C.M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own financial documents and memories - Journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop essential questions for the research o About the situation of the activity o The conflictivity in the activity with new business models o Actions developed to fight against new business models. o Use of legal authority o The protection of partners and members o The scope of the college o Knowledge sharing o Members' obligations and requirements - Analyze impressions from other interviews

Source: Own elaboration.

The first step in this process will be done comparing the situation of the activity between entrepreneurs and institutions. If the answers to the questions are similar, we will think that the institutions are conscious of the entrepreneurs' problems. On the other side, if they are not capable of feeling the problems of their members, we will expect careless actions and high levels of conflictivity in such activities

Secondly, we will ask the agents of professional associations questions related to the environment of the activity. For us, it is essential to evaluate the perspective of these associations. They must answer us about the threats and opportunities available in their profession, and how the associations protect their members.

Later, we will ask them about the relation between the professional association and their members, asking questions related to the requirements and obligations, knowledge sharing, and protection against new threats. The final step is to share all the information with our interviewers and extract the impressions.

Purpose of the study.

This point reflects the purpose of the research and serves to inform the cases of the usefulness and the importance of it. We believe that this study will:

- To report the socio-economic reality of the sectors studied (or those that may be similar), paying special attention to a few sectors that are in constant evolution and change in the business model.
- To learn about other business models, including among other sectors, behavior, and proposed solutions to increase business profitability.
- To inform cases about possible solutions to face future challenges in private health services.
- To show the real influence of institutions in these sectors.

Script - Operational questions.

This section describes the questions prepared for the pilot case study and qualitative interviews. The pilot case study will help to develop and refine the questionnaire that will be applied in the quantitative study. There will be several open questions oriented to analyze the cases and their behaviors. The questions will be based on the arguments of intellectual capital (IC), knowledge transfer (KT), and institutional theories (IT). These questions were formulated in order to ask managers, independent or associated entrepreneurs, and professional associations' agents. To alleviate the process, we only show the final script.

Table A 7.3: Final script.

Section related to the emerging business idea.
<p><i>These questions were formulated in order to:</i></p> <p><i>...know the idea of creating a business, the motivations, and their troubles before running the establishment. (a, b).</i></p> <p><i>...know the interviewee's entrepreneurial orientation (b).</i></p> <p><i>...know the entry barriers and alliances created (c, d).</i></p> <p><i>...understand the goals related to the creation of professional association (e).</i></p>
Entrepreneurs and franchisees
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How did you come up with an idea of starting your own business? What were the main motivations for starting up your own business? Have your parents (or family) worked (or are working) in some professions related to yours? Have you been influenced by political or social factors (facilities, scholarships related, helps, etc.) In order to choose your profession? Have you chosen your profession due to psychological characteristics (autonomy, creativity, gender identity, innovation, the locus of control, be a success, organizational and leadership skills, risk-taking, self-confidence, self-esteem)? Have you searched for partners to start a business? What is their role (stakeholders, work-partners, business angels, franchising companies)? Do you believe the legal requirements are easy to accomplish (laws, local rules, professional association's authority, etc.)?
Professional associations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the goals of the professional association when it was created? Have they changed over time?
Routine aspects
<p><i>These questions are formulated in order to:</i></p> <p><i>...know the capacity to standardize the tasks (a, b, d, and d).</i></p> <p><i>...know the workload of each task (a).</i></p> <p><i>...know the distribution of opening hours³⁸ (c)</i></p> <p><i>...understand how institutions (franchising or professional associations) help their members day by day (e, f)</i></p> <p><i>...find the specificity of the formation (g).</i></p> <p><i>...find out how the members are helped by their professional association (h, i).</i></p> <p><i>...compare the help between a professional association and franchising companies from franchisees' point of view (j).</i></p>
Entrepreneurs and franchisees
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Describe some of the routine procedures of your business. To what extent can be codified...? Critical tasks (tasks related directly to the activity, e.g. Procurement, do the services, etc.) Auxiliary tasks (other activities not related directly to the activity but necessary to run the business. (e.g., cleaning, advertising, accounting, etc.) How much time do you spend on each type of activity? Do you have job descriptions? How do you share this information with your partners or colleagues and employees (manuals, conferences, congress, meetings...)? With which frequency? What are your opening hours? How are they distributed during the week? Which activities in your business are standardized? To what extent? Describe them. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Critical tasks Auxiliary tasks How to professional associations influence your business? How do they do it (journals, bulletins, letters, visits, etc.)? How frequently they contact you? Do franchisors or professional associations help you solve some business problems?

³⁸ In Spain, small companies are free to design their opening hours. If companies share the same schedule, it can be source of institutional influence. On the contrary, if there are differences on schedules, it can source of system innovation, maybe from institutions, given the freedom to entrepreneurs to organize themselves, or maybe from organizations in order to create competitive advantages.

- j. If you were to give up your company, where would you employ your skills?

Professional associations

- k. What are the daily support actions to the members from the professional association?
l. What are the activities developed by professional associations day by day?

Franchisees

- m. Who helps you better with your business, the franchising company, or the professional association? Why? What are the differences between them?

Training and retraining aspects

These questions are formulated in order to:

- ...find out what is the minimum education and skills to do the activity (a, b).
...estimate the turbulence on their environment and, as a result, the necessities to improve the service (c, d and e).
...know the educational requirements employees must acquire (f).
...know the entrepreneur's previous jobs (g).*

All parties

- a. What education and training are needed to do your job?
b. How long have you been trained to practice this profession? From where is your education/ degree (institution or organization)?
c. How do you update your knowledge (courses, congress...)?
d. How do you learn about new methods/techniques to provide a better service for your customers?
e. Do you take refresher courses? Were they useful?
f. How long have your professional employees (dentists, optometrists, physiotherapists) been trained?

Entrepreneurs and franchisees

- g. Have you had professional experience working for another company before starting your own business? For how long?

Economic, financial and geographical resources

These questions are formulated in order to:

- ...know the entrepreneurs' perceptions of their business environment (a, d).
...know the financial (b, e, and f), legal (c), and geographical (i) requirements related to the business.
...know the profitability per employee (f, g, and h).
...know the perception of franchising property rights from franchisees' point of view (j).*

All parties

- a. What are the threats and opportunities of starting a new business?
b. How long do you believe you (the entrepreneur or franchisee) would need to recover the investment?

Entrepreneurs and franchisees

- c. Do you consider the monthly fee offsets the acts and policies taken by the professional association? Why?
d. How many competitors are there in the neighborhood?
e. What is the initial investment necessary to start a business like yours?
f. What are the monthly fixed costs that must face?
g. What is the average monthly income?
h. How many people are working on your business (including entrepreneurs and working partners)?
i. What is an excellent location for your business from the customer's point of view?

Franchisees

- j. Do you consider the monthly fee offsets the acts and policies taken by franchising chains on your business? Why?

Franchising companies

These questions are formulated in order to:

- ...know the state of the relations between franchising companies and dominant business model (a, b)
...know the impact of franchising in the dominant business model (c, d, and e)
...know the image of franchising companies from entrepreneurs in these activities (a, b, f, and g).
...know how franchisees see the dominant business model. (h)*

All parties

- a. How do you perceive the image and reputation of the franchises chains in your sector (personal opinion)?
- b. What is the relationship with the franchised chains (institutional opinion)?
- c. Since the appearance of franchise chains in your industry, do you believe that the sector becomes more competitive? Why?
- d. Do you believe that the franchising chains have evolved into a more efficient business model? Why?
- e. How do you feel about other business models (partnerships, co-operatives, bargain centres) in the same sector? Do you think that another model would be more appropriate?

Franchisees

- f. What kind of problems you have with the franchisors?
- g. Initial costs?
- h. Payment of dues to the franchise chains?
- i. Dependence on units of the franchised units?
- j. Any others?
- k. What kind of benefits do you have belonging to a franchising chain?
- l. Do you believe these dominant business models (independent) is a threat to your business? Why?

Professional associations

- m. Did the PA adapt to a new environment provoked since franchise companies appeared? How?

Professional associations

These questions are formulated in order to:

...know the state of the relations with professional associations (a, b, c).

...identify entrepreneurs' (and franchisees) satisfaction related to the professional association performance (c, d, f, and h).

...know how independent entrepreneurs see franchise outlets (g).

All parties

- a. What is the image and reputation of the professional associations in the sector (e.g., defensive, aggressive, a place to complains, etc.)?
- b. How professional associations help your position in the market?
- c. Do you think the professional association offers you solutions to provide a better service?
- d. How do you feel about other business models in the same sector? Do you think that another model would be more appropriate?

Entrepreneurs and franchisees

- e. What kind of problems you have with the professional association?
- f. Monthly fee?
- g. PA performance (professional association's attitude against threats)?
- h. What kind of benefits do you have from the professional association's membership?

Independent entrepreneurs

- i. Do you believe that franchising outlets are a threat to your business? Why?

Professional associations

- j. Do you believe professional association may do a better service? Why?

Vision of future

These questions are formulated in order to:

...know entrepreneurs' feelings related to the future.

...know if entrepreneurs are aware of the situation.

...ask directly the main research questions (b).

All parties

- a. How do you think the business sector will evolve in the future?
- b. What kind of business model do you believe will be the best choice in the future, be independent or enter a franchising chain? Why?

Source: Own elaboration.

Appendix II: Introduction letter: (pre-test).

Estimada Junta de Gobierno del {FIRSTNAME},

En el marco del Programa Internacional de Doctorado de la Universitat de València (UV), Guillermo Navarro está estudiando la estructura y tareas de los Servicios Profesionales en España. El objetivo final de esa investigación es mejorar la profesión en términos de satisfacción de sus colegiados y de competitividad de sus clínicas. Para poder realizar de forma rigurosa ese estudio se requiere de unos datos que sólo pueden obtenerse mediante la cumplimentación individual de un cuestionario que es administrado de forma on-line.

Para la difusión del mismo se requiere de su inestimable colaboración. Le adjuntamos una copia del mismo para, si es el caso, sea revisado previamente por ustedes. Además, si lo desean les remitiremos de forma gratuita un Informe Ejecutivo con las principales conclusiones del mismo, serán invitados a todas aquellas actividades de difusión de los mismos y su Colegio figurará en los reconocimientos.

Para iniciar el proceso, y por temas metodológicos, le rogamos que envíen un correo electrónico a todos sus colegiados con las siguientes características:

1. ASUNTO: Investigación de la UV sobre Servicios Profesionales.
 2. CUERPO: el texto de correo electrónico que figura a continuación de éste.
- Si tiene alguna duda puede contactar directamente con el Director de la Tesis Doctoral por el medio que estime más oportuno (puig@uv.es) (963.828687).

Esperando de su colaboración reciban un cordial saludo.

Guillermo Navarro Sanfelix (Doctorando)
Francisco Puig Blanco (Director)

CUERPO:

Estimado/a colegiado/a del {FIRSTNAME},

En el marco del Programa Internacional de Doctorado de la Universitat de València (UV), Guillermo Navarro está estudiando la estructura y tareas de los servicios profesionales en España. El objetivo final de esa investigación es mejorar la profesión en términos de satisfacción de sus colegiados y de competitividad de sus clínicas. Para poder realizar de forma rigurosa ese estudio se requiere de unos datos que serán recopilados mediante un cuestionario on-line.

Dado el alcance y oportunidad de esta investigación le ANIMAMOS a que participe, para ello solo tiene que hacer clic en el siguiente enlace:

{SURVEYURL}

Es importante destacar que los datos serán recopilados ANÓNIMAMENTE y TRATADOS CON TOTAL CONFIDENCIALIDAD Y DISCRECIÓN, y que NO SERÁN PUBLICADOS DE MODO INDIVIDUAL.

Agradeciéndole de antemano su colaboración, reciban un cordial saludo. Atentamente,

Guillermo Navarro Sanfelix (Doctorando)
Francisco Puig Blanco (Director)

Appendix III: Reminder letter.

Estimada Junta de Gobierno del {FIRSTNAME},

Desde el equipo de investigación de la Universitat de Valencia, perteneciente al Departamento de Dirección de Empresas, le recordamos que recientemente se le invitó a colaborar con nosotros en la investigación que estamos realizando, que lleva por título:

«{SURVEYNAME}»

Según le indicamos en el correo enviado el mes pasado, el objetivo final de esta investigación es mejorar la profesión en términos de satisfacción de sus colegiados y de competitividad de sus clínicas. Por ello, le animamos a que envíe a sus colegiados el siguiente correo ubicado a continuación, para que puedan rellenar el cuestionario en formato on-line.

Le recordamos que estaríamos agradecidos de compartir los resultados con ustedes una vez finalizado la investigación.

Sin nada más que decir, reciba un cordial saludo.

Guillermo Navarro Sanfelix (Doctorando)
Francisco Puig Blanco (Director)

1. ASUNTO: Investigación de la UV sobre Servicios Profesionales.

2. CUERPO:

Estimado/a colegiado/a del {FIRSTNAME},

Desde la Universitat de Valencia estamos colaborando con multitud de colegios profesionales de todas las regiones de España con el objetivo de mejorar la profesión en términos de satisfacción de los colegiados y competitividad de sus clínicas. Para poder realizar de forma rigurosa ese estudio se requiere de unos datos que serán recopilados mediante un cuestionario on-line.

Dado el alcance y oportunidad de esta investigación le ANIMAMOS a que participe, para ello solo tiene que hacer clic en el siguiente enlace:

{SURVEYURL}

Es importante destacar que los datos serán recopilados ANÓNIMAMENTE y TRATADOS CON TOTAL CONFIDENCIALIDAD Y DISCRECIÓN, y que NO SERÁN PUBLICADOS DE MODO INDIVIDUAL.

Agradeciéndole de antemano su colaboración, reciban un cordial saludo.

Atentamente,

Guillermo Navarro Sanfelix (Doctorando)
Francisco Puig Blanco (Director)

Appendix IV: Questionnaire.

General data.

1. Please, indicate your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. To what professional association do you belong to?
☐ Optometry ☐ Dentistry ☐ Physiotherapy
3. Currently, what is your professional situation?
☐ I work on my own business ☐ Public official or similar ☐ Unemployed
☐ Employee ☐ I work on other activities ☐ Retired
☐ Other: _____
4. On what kind of business model do you do your profession?
☐ Independent ☐ Licensing ☐ Co-operative
☐ Bargain Centres ☐ Franchising ☐ Hospital
☐ Other: _____

Intellectual capital measurement.

1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= More or less disagree; 4= Undecided; 5= More or less agree; 6= Agree; 7= Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The clinic where I develop my services allows me to organize my work freely.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compared with competitors, professionals of the clinic where I develop my services have much more experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The clinic where I develop my services, human resources management is carried out by the manager or entrepreneur.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We perform some actions to maintain the loyalty of our customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The reputation of our company is higher than our competitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Control Variable – Initial training year: _____							

Institutional influences.

1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= More or less disagree; 4= Undecided; 5= More or less agree; 6= Agree; 7= Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
We ask our environment (suppliers, administrations, workers, or distributors) about consumer trends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We watch out for the services offered by our competitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In our activity, the most successful competitors are part of a network of clinics (franchises, co-operatives, licenses, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The professional association actively works to protect and improve our profession.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Performance.

1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= More or less disagree; 4= Undecided; 5= More or less agree; 6= Agree; 7= Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When we detect an unsatisfied customer need, we react faster than our competitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The quality of the service we provide is much better than that of our competitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The fees for clinic services are more affordable than those of our competitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Finally, if you wish, you can comment on any question or suggestion in this space:

If you wish to receive an executive summary of the investigation in which you have participated, please, indicate your email where we can send it.

Thank you for your collaboration:

Appendix V: Truth tables.

Table A 7.4: The effect of institutional and IC dimensions in the business model.

<i>BM</i>	<i>P.A.</i>	<i>Market</i>	<i>HC</i>	<i>RC</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Raw consistency</i>
1	1	1	1	1	10	0.30
1	1	0	1	1	3	0.18
1	1	0	1	0	4	0.14
1	1	0	0	0	3	0.13
1	0	1	1	1	3	0.21
1	0	1	1	0	4	0.19
1	0	1	0	1	5	0.22
1	0	0	1	1	3	0.11
1	0	0	1	0	4	0.08
1	0	0	0	0	8	0.09
0	1	1	1	1	10	0.70
0	1	0	1	1	3	0.82
0	1	0	1	0	4	0.86
0	1	0	0	0	3	0.87
0	0	1	1	1	3	0.79
0	0	1	1	0	4	0.81
0	0	1	0	1	5	0.78
0	0	0	1	1	3	0.89
0	0	0	1	0	4	0.92
0	0	0	0	0	8	0.91

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.5: The institutional influence, the perceived IC, and its impact on the performance.

<i>BM</i>	<i>P.A.</i>	<i>Market</i>	<i>HC</i>	<i>RC</i>	<i>Performance</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Raw consistency</i>
1	1	1	1	1	1	4	0.82
1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0.97
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0.80
1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0.89
1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0.82
0	1	1	1	1	1	6	0.81
0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0.76
0	1	0	1	0	0	4	0.68
0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0.73
0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0.85
0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0.73
0	0	1	0	1	1	4	0.82
0	0	0	1	1	0	3	0.78
0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0.78
0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0.76

Source: Own elaboration.

Appendix VI: Qualitative quotes.

Table A 7.6: Punishment policies.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“In general, professional associations make many campaigns to monitor bad practices. We will not specify, but if I have noticed that there are some campaigns of "be careful", "look well where it is", "dentistry is not sold", etc. They have done it always, even before the appearance of the chains”. (Fsor.5)</p> <p>“I have had some problem with physiotherapists, some have told lies, devalued, etc. But realize that the business world is like this, sometimes you can cry, you may think you're not so good, you can feel lost”. (Fsor.4)</p>	<p>“We use disciplinary reports, not sanctions. They are informational procedures when there are inadequate behaviors (...). There are statutes, there is a code of ethics approved by the general assembly, and there is a legal adviser who advises them. But they are informational proceedings, not sanction”. (PA.1).</p> <p>“Initially, there is nothing against franchising. On the other hand, the work of the professionals who work in the franchisor chains has the same valuation and the same attention as the rest of the professionals who work in other places”. (PA.2)</p>
Journal and news quotations	
<p>“79.3% of the claims to the College of Dentists of Las Palmas in 2017 were on dental chains and franchises.” (Ecodiario.es, 30.01.2018).</p> <p>The COEC (Dentistry PA of Cataluña) a year and a half ago, we managed to take to the Parliament of Catalonia a motion that was approved unanimously by the parliamentary groups. It includes regular health advertising that, in addition to the need for <i>numerus clausus</i>, is vital for the future of the profession. (Dr. Antoni Gómez interview, COEC president. Gaceta Dental, 06.02.2018)</p> <p>The Spanish health care throws dentists and physiotherapists to the precariousness of the franchises (economíadigital.es, 01.03.2016).</p> <p>The abandonment of these specialties by the public system pushes professionals to work as false self-employed people and to sell unnecessary products and services in aggressive sales chains.</p> <p>The new franchises of dentists and physiotherapists proliferate like mushrooms in autumn, where public health does not offer medical coverage. The new business model, which prioritizes profitability over the health service, has raised a wave of complaints among workers forced to take on much more precarious conditions than the rest of the medical staff protected by the public health system.</p>	

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.7: Education requirements.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“What we do need to work are physiotherapists. You cannot have a clinic of physiotherapy without physiotherapists (...).In this franchise chain, in particular, you do not need anything to be able to manage it because Praxia helps you with everything: managing, training, and teaching. Almost everything. We also have a team of managers that try to advise our franchisees”. (Fsor.4)</p> <p>“Obviously the Bachelor’s degree of physiotherapy.” (PA.1)</p>	<p>“University training is not required, so education does not come from university studies, although they do recommend it to be franchisees. On the other hand, they prefer that the cooks are titled people to lighten the formation. Otherwise, they must complete the entire training for eight weeks”. (Fsor.3)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.8: The bureaucracy.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“Well, we didn't do anything before. We registered at the labor office as an autonomous worker and little more, but now it's tremendous. Xray/debris/public insurance... it's brutal. At the beginning was even more because we had to buy more stuff”. (ExFsee.8)</p> <p>“It is true that the architect of the town hall puts a thousand strikes, even that my architect had to go many times to complete many formalities that demanded us. The truth that was lengthened a lot, and also the health department put many handles”. (Ind.10)</p> <p>“Very much, indeed. An atrocity. People came from the ministry of industry, health, education, City hall staff... The most difficult was from the Ministry of Education, we had to meet a (huge) number of requirements. (Fsee.7)</p>	<p>“Ministry of Health has some requirements that must be met. For those who have recently finished the degree can be tricky. For me that already mounted more than 60 clinics is something easy”. (Fsee.5)</p> <p>“Well, what any entrepreneur has, nothing out of the ordinary.” (Fsee.3)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.9: Business opportunities.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“The sector was very unprofessional: every dentist going to war on his own, many dentists were very unprofessional and practiced a certain picaresque³⁹. (...) It was Vitaldent (Franchising company) who set some guidelines for the professionalization of the sector; of universalization. He has lowered the clinics to the ground floor and has put financial tools. Now all have it”. (Fsee.5)</p> <p>“As a training center and dental clinic, we are the first in Castilla la Mancha. With the formation of the degree, we have a public high school, which offers 20 places and is the only competition we have. As for the clinic, we have a lot of competition. There are more than 100 clinics in a small city” (Fsee.7)</p> <p>“It (the activity) has recently entered a vortex of brutal mercantilism in which the most important thing is to find the discount and final price of the product for the final customer.” (Man.6)</p> <p>“I think that the medical point of view is losing a lot on dentistry. It is focusing a lot on franchises. Since so many dentists are coming out of the faculty, they go straight to these chains”. (ExFsee.8)</p>	<p>“We are fighting to have specialties, and for a physiotherapist to be head of the department in hospitals and not dependent on nursing.” (PA.1)</p> <p>“The strength we have is the healthcare we have as diabetes. The medical association relies on us, for example. Primary care physicians sometimes cannot care for all their patients”. (PA.2)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

³⁹ Picaresque: pertaining to, characteristic of, or characterized by a form of prose fiction, originally developed in Spain, in which the adventures of an engagingly roguish hero are described in a series of usually humorous or satiric episodes that often depict, in realistic detail, the everyday life of the common people. (Source: www.dictionary.com).

Table A 7.10: Maturation stage.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“It will become more and more professional. There will be more chains and fewer independent professionals. The professionals will work in these chains, or they will set up very professional clinics” (Fsor.5)</p>	<p>“We cannot guarantee the protection of the franchisees. Business means denial of leisure⁴⁰. A gentleman who has a restaurant business must be aware of his business every day, and he must be aware of the establishment next to his own”. (Fsor.3)</p> <p>“Our past as a franchisee has helped us to organize better this clinic. The circuit we have here we owe to them. You enter here. You go to the waiting room, from there to the dentist's chairs, then to the payment office and from there you go out. It's very comfortable (...). Besides, we have to look for a ground floor”. (ExFsee.8)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.11: The turbulence in the market.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“Trademarks, as they want to sell more, train dentists. They do it using centers like this, which have space for training, we call it "co-working": they come and offer us their innovations and techniques to offer it to dentists.” (Fsor.5)</p> <p>“It should also be noted that there is an increase in competitiveness in the profession.” (ExFsee.8)</p>	<p>“At the moment, it does not affect much to me, although one of the new ones also offers a school of the back. At the moment, we have not lost clientele since our service is personalized. However, in general, the number of competitors has increased”. (Ind.10)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.12: Social facilitators.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“Yes, I asked for some help, for young businesswoman from the IVAJ (Youth Valencian Institute), and then they gave me helping funds. I do not remember exactly the amount, but it was around € 2000. It was very little to set up a business that exceeds € 50,000 between materials, work, and more”. (Ind.10)</p> <p>“I did not, but Lucia (his wife and partner) did it because she was a businesswoman under 30 years old, the public administration gave her 7,000 euros, in X months”. (Ind.11)</p> <p>“When the courses started, yes, but because they are courses regulated by the Junta of Andalucía, with its stamp. Here is what regulated training is taught. On the other hand, "crown" campaigns have started with suppliers for trademarks to make courses for clients to capture. We have given some grants, especially for regulated courses”. (Fsor.5)</p>	<p>“No, nothing. Neither as young entrepreneurs nor as a businesswoman. We looked for help, but found nothing”. (Fsee.7)</p> <p>“From Spanish administration, nothing at all, or by any private institution either. Not only that, we do not receive any help, but the only thing we receive is tripping. Today, being an entrepreneur, in general, is to try to be a hero”. (Fsor.3)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

⁴⁰ Morphologically spoken, “business” in Spanish means “Negation of leisure”.

Table A 7.13: Additional training required.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“You should ethically do a master's degree to perform it (the profession) well.” (ExFsee.8)</p> <p>“The physiotherapists that we are looking for must have a minimum of experience in order to be able to sell a job well done. The reason is that newly licensed physiotherapists have little experience”. (Fsor.4)</p>	<p>“No university training is required, so education does not come from university studies, although they do recommend it to be franchisees. On the other hand, they prefer that the cooks are titled people to lighten the formation. Otherwise, they must complete the entire training for eight weeks”. (Fsor.3)</p> <p>“Nothing, because they are newly graduated workers who have done an internship here with me. If I like how they work, I hire them. Nevertheless, no, they have no experience. I just got them to train in my clinic. As for training if I ask for some postgraduate”. (Ind.10)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.14: Perception of professional association services.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“We have a translation service without cost ... We are trying to bring research and knowledge to the members. We have accounting, financial, tax and legal advisors. Physiotherapy books, free of charge (...). Besides the insurance, they have some English courses, mobility aids, paperwork ...” (PA.1)</p> <p>“Especially in information work. For example, we hold an international congress every two years, which is the most important related to optics and optometry in Europe (...). We also develop campaigns for society (...). Also, we have a professional legal and labor office (...). Besides, we also carry out marketing courses. In the publicity magazine that we advertise, we have a business section and another section dedicated to trade unions and business aspects”. (PA.2)</p>	<p>“The truth is that you pay and pay and pay, and the services are not ... well, they are reporting legislation and such ... But technically few things (...) They should help us, especially with more training (...) and with better recognition of the specialties. Recognizing the professionals who have some training. As it happens in many European countries.” (ExFsee.8)</p> <p>“The PA is used, mainly when you have a bureaucratic problem. You'll find out if you want, and they're supposed to protect us. In addition, we have a problem with franchises that is a model in which the profession should not go (...). The PA organizes courses, workshops ... They inform us mainly via email and with the magazine. We receive emails practically every day. Furthermore, you will ask me: "How do you say that they do almost nothing if we receive every day?" It is that the emails that they send us are either of formation, or of information of what they do, and "the economy goes like this," and "we have taken legal action on such. " (Ind.11)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.15: Knowledge acquisition sources.

Suppliers acquisition profile	Personnel interest profile
<p>“Yes, we have a training department, that what it does is together with suppliers we look for the general needs have the opticians, and we do both classroom courses and webinars, provider webs, and in some cases, we do courses separately as therapy for children.” (Man.6)</p> <p>“Through our suppliers. Dentistry is an eminently private sector and operates a lot through providers. They make much money, and there are compelling companies that sell their products, offer courses to educate the dentists to do things on their way. This occurs throughout the sector”. (Fsor.5).</p>	<p>“I finished the course 16 years ago, and every year I take courses, I've gone to Bilbao, to Vigo”. (Ind.10)</p> <p>“I usually go to congresses every two or three years. American Congress if it is possible because they have the best”. (ExFee.8)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.16: Branding companies' impact.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“Especially along with the crisis was when we had noticed it most. Our reaction has been to try to convey to partners the importance of providing services instead of throwing prices to the bottom”. (Man.6)</p> <p>“The truth that some companies have taken away since franchising chains appeared. (After the landing of franchising chains) It has become a much more competitive sector, but many franchised clinics have gone to hell. But it is because if they do not provide a good service, they do not attract more customers, and in the end, they close”. (Ind.10).</p> <p>“Yes, they have affected the profession. I think they have only contributed to one good thing. Moreover, they have opened dentistry more to the public. Dentistry was a very expensive medical specialty and they have cheapened the dentistry. Nevertheless, they have done it based on bad things (overtreatments, misleading advertising, newly and professionals). They have made us get upset with some things. At the level of marketing, visibility. They were the first clinics that had an impact on commercial sales (...). They have also taught us about financing. There are things that they seem to be pioneers”. (Ind.11)</p>	<p>“The truth is shallow. There have been clinics like “Fision” ... think that these, to operate have to do many services and very cheap, and that may complain the first time ... but to consolidate a patient is rare” (PA.1)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Table A 7.17: Job description.

Presence of item	Non-presence
<p>“As for auxiliary tasks, we do have them recorded in a manual. But it is true that when it comes to getting the task done, we do not follow the manual step by step, because we deal with patients, and this is not "two plus two"⁴¹” (Fsee.7)</p> <p>“Soon, we will have training for the franchisee on aspects that they have not received information yet. It will deal with clinical management, how to use the application with the patient and basic dentistry to have a little knowledge related”. (Fsor.5)</p>	<p>“We do not have any tasks that have to be done daily. There are some little things, but little operative details (...). I think everyone knows what they have to do, for example, informing clients about appointments, cleaning, and something else. This is transmitted verbally”. (Fsor.4)</p> <p>“Sometimes we have to check the work that nurses do, but hey, we do not use to write all procedures. This task is effortless and has no complications”. (ExFsee.8)</p> <p>“No, because they already know how to work.” (Ind.10)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

⁴¹ Note: it is a Spanish expression. It means that the procedure has to be adapted to each patient.

Table A 7.18: The knowledge transfer mechanisms used by our cases.

Ref.	Name ⁴²	Auxiliary knowledge transferred	Critical knowledge transferred	Feedback
PA.1	J.C.	✗	Courses Blogs and news Knowledge platform Specialized journals Specialized books	✓
PA.2	J.C.M.	Courses (marketing, trade unions, advertising)	Congress Meetings Courses Social campaigns (YouTube) Specialized Journals Magazines	✓
Fsor.3	L.G.	Software Visits	Courses Visits Manual of operations	✓
Fsor.4	A.M.	Visits Emails Software Verbally	Courses	✓
Fsor.5	R.G.	Visits Software Manual of operations	Courses	✓
Man.6	P.L.	✗	Training department Courses Webinars	✓
Fsee.7	M.G.	Manual of operations Verbally Software	Programs (education CHE) Courses	✗
ExFsee.8	J.C.	Master's Degree (included patients attention) Franchisor past training PA reports Meetings	Master's Degree Courses Congresses Specialized journals Specialized books Verbally	✗
Fsee.9	M.N.	Visits and phone calls Meetings Software	Manual of operations (recipes)	✗
Ind.10	P.Y.	Social networks	Master's Degree Courses Meetings Specialized journals	✗
Ind.11	J.Q.	Bachelor's Degree Verbally PA reports	Congresses Courses Collaboration with colleagues	✗
Ind.12	R.O.	Software Verbally	Courses Congresses Collaboration with colleagues	✗

Source: Own elaboration.

⁴² On some cases, I only write down the initial letters because some interviewed asked me to be anonymous.

Table A 7.19: Retraining knowledge frequency.

Knowledge acquisition in months	Knowledge acquisition in years
<p>“At <i>Dental Company</i> (his previous job experience), we had something new every two months, for the hygienists, for doctors, for clinic directors, sales courses, printing courses, supplier dental courses, and many things plus.” (Fsor.5).</p> <p>“The magazines we publish are monthly or bi-monthly, but every month there are two or three courses.” (PA.2)</p>	<p>“I finished the course 16 years ago, and every year I take courses, I've gone to Bilbao, to Vigo ... I've done some courses”. (Ind.10)</p>

Source: Own elaboration

Table A 7.20: Evolution forecast.

The future based on retraining and specialties.	The future based on efficiency
<p>“It's complicated (...). Now we have a threat that is selling online. We believe that optometrists need to adapt soon techniques that retain customers' loyalty. (...). We have to increase the clinical component of the optometrist optician of health care. That we are perceived as health providers.” (PA.2)</p> <p>“I think the sector will position itself in quality, especially private clinics.” (Ind.11)</p>	<p>“I think they are going to stay the best. It will not be like hairdressers; there is one at each corner. I think they are going to stay the best. Not the most settled, but the best professionals”. (Fsor.4)</p> <p>“The professionals will work in chains, or they will set up very professional clinics.” (Fsor.5)</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

Appendix VII: Introduction (Spanish).

Antecedentes y justificación de la investigación.

La importancia del emprendimiento en la sociedad.

En línea con Schumpeter (1942) se podría afirmar que, gracias a la iniciativa emprendedora, una sociedad innova y se reorganiza hacia otros patrones de producción y comercialización más eficientes y universales. Aunque también podríamos afirmar que la creación de nuevas empresas y el emprendimiento son algunos de los elementos más importantes de cualquier economía para generar y distribuir la riqueza (GEM, 2018; Shantz et al, 2018; Naminse et al, 2019). En otras palabras, emprender no es algo únicamente relevante para los propietarios de las empresas, sino también para todo el entorno económico, geográfico y social en el que se sitúan (Steyaert y Katz, 2004).

Dada la importancia que tiene el emprendimiento como motor económico y social, este fenómeno está muy presente en la agenda de políticos y gobernantes. Por ello, desde cualquier estamento local, provincial, autonómico o nacional se trazan líneas y acciones tendentes a su fortalecimiento y estímulo como parte esencial para la mejora de la sociedad⁴³.

No obstante, el diseño de políticas para el fomento del emprendimiento no garantiza la continuidad y éxito de tales iniciativas. Tal es así que en la literatura económico-empresarial, uno de los principales tópicos de interés es el estudio de las diferentes tasas de crecimiento y supervivencia que los emprendedores registran (Vivas-López et al, 2016). En este sentido, la Teoría de Recursos y Capacidades señala la posesión de recursos escasos como fuente principal de ventajas competitivas, siendo el tamaño y la antigüedad aspectos clave en dicho enfoque y determinantes en la supervivencia del proyecto. Desde otra teoría, la Organización Industrial establece que el resultado de una empresa está determinado por la unión entre la estructura de la industria (como podrían ser las

⁴³Un ejemplo de tal preocupación la podemos encontrar en algunas revistas científicas como *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* que están orientadas directamente a estudiar el impacto del emprendimiento en su contexto local y regional.

políticas públicas para una determinada actividad) y la conducta de la empresa (inherente a los objetivos de los directivos o su aversión al riesgo), de tal forma que es el sector y, dentro del mismo la actividad que desempeña la empresa, los aspectos claves en su crecimiento. Finalmente, además de la dotación de recursos y el entorno competitivo, la localización también es factor que se ha empleado para explicar las diferencias en la performance de las empresas. Por ejemplo, Gwebu et al. (2019), han demostrado recientemente que las nuevas empresas ubicadas en parques científicos (aglomeradas) han mostrado mejores resultados en términos de ventas y performance.

Por tanto, el estudio del origen y alcance de esa desigual performance en la actividad emprendedora es un tema abierto que necesita ser abordado teniendo en cuenta los aspectos anteriormente mencionados y que podrían ser catalogados como de contexto (Porter y Kramer, 2011; Boons et al., 2013). Creemos que adoptar ese enfoque de contexto, y arrojar alguna luz a ese debate en la heterogeneidad competitiva de pequeñas empresas que se dedican a actividades intensivas en conocimientos es de sumo interés investigador por al menos tres motivos: estratégicos, socio-económicos y de oportunidad.

Su justificación a **nivel estratégico** se encuentra porque la primera decisión de todo emprendedor está relacionada con la estrategia que pretende implementar. Dicha estrategia se debe desarrollar decidiendo cuáles van a ser las relaciones con los clientes y proveedores; cuáles van a ser los mecanismos de información, la organización de los miembros de la empresa, las alianzas estratégicas o cómo se va a crear valor. En definitiva, la primera decisión consiste en determinar cuál va a ser el modelo de negocio a implementar.

A **nivel socio-económico** también encontramos justificación porque la tasa de fracaso que los nuevos negocios cosechan todavía es muy alta y porque las consecuencias emocionales y sociales de tales fracasos son dramáticas. Según Blasco y Carrizosa (2007), el tamaño determina en gran parte la supervivencia de las empresas. En este sentido, las pequeñas empresas son las que registran una tasa de supervivencia más baja (51%) en comparación con las grandes empresas (65%). Estas diferencias se acentúan si las pequeñas empresas operan en

actividades de servicios, las cuales registran una vida media de 7 años, en comparación con los 13 años de grandes empresas que también operan en estas mismas actividades.

Por último, el tercer motivo que justifica la presente investigación reside en las **oportunidades** investigadoras que ofrecen algunas actividades poco estudiadas como las que serán objeto en la presente Tesis Doctoral. Según Lugo y Espina (2014), la elección por parte del emprendedor de una actividad u otra se basa en una serie de determinantes institucionales, económicos y sociales. En los últimos tiempos se observa un importante incremento en el interés por la creación de nuevos establecimientos intensivos en conocimiento (López y Ramos, 2013). De hecho que el estímulo a la iniciativa emprendedora y la apuesta por actividades vinculadas al desarrollo de software informático, la búsqueda y aplicación de fuentes energéticas alternativas o el avance y aprovechamiento de los servicios sanitarios, forman parte de las más recomendadas por organismos como la OCDE⁴⁴.

Por tanto, podemos afirmar que actualmente las actividades intensivas en conocimiento suponen a nivel académico una gran oportunidad para el estudio de los antecedentes de los diferentes modelos de negocio implementados (entorno y capacidades) así como para el análisis la asociación de éstos con el desempeño de sus empresas (performance). Aunque existen algunos artículos publicados, (Ej.: Ripoll-Soler and De Miguel-Molina, 2014; Hyder et al., 2019), gran parte de las actividades estudiadas en esta tesis. Por tanto, este trabajo se plantea con el objetivo de cubrir algunos de los gaps identificados. Para ello, estudio algunos de los SSP más relevantes.

⁴⁴ Fuente: <http://www.oecd.org>. Employment Outlook 2020 Facing the jobs crisis. Checked 10/06/2020.

Un ejemplo de emprendimiento en actividades intensivas en conocimiento (KIBS): Las pequeñas empresas de los servicios sanitarios privados. Elementos diferenciadores y situación actual.

Mientras que en lo relativo a su actividad económica si está claramente aceptada la distinción entre las empresas manufactureras de las de servicios Segarra-Oña et al., 2014) (en referencia a la producción de bienes, de carácter tangible frente a la prestación de servicios, de carácter intangible) (Windrum y Tomlinson, 1999), no parece tan clara la distinción entre las empresas de servicios sanitarios en comparación con otro tipo de servicios. Según Romero-Amado (2010), este problema es debido a la amplia heterogeneidad de actividades que se ubican en el sector terciario, y a su carácter temporal y dinámico. Por ello, este autor recomienda no estudiar el sector terciario como un todo, sino centrarse en aquellas actividades similares entre ellas. Es decir, el contexto importa.

Uno de los primeros intentos para segmentar el sector terciario vino a partir del artículo de Miles et al., (1995), que profundizó en los servicios intensivos en conocimiento. Estos se definen como *“aquellas actividades basadas en el conocimiento y experiencia de los profesionales en relación a un ámbito técnico específico o una función concreta.”* (Windrum y Tomlinson, 1999:392). Bajo esta definición hay dos tipos de profesiones. En el primer grupo están aquellas que desarrollan nuevas tecnologías llamadas T-KIBS (*Technology Knowledge-Intensive Business Services*, en los que se integran telecomunicaciones, ingenieros, etc.). En el segundo grupo se encuentran los usuarios de dichas tecnologías llamadas P-KIBS (*Professional Knowledge-Intensive Business Services*, entre los que se recogen actividades como publicidad, inmobiliarias, servicios legales, etc.). Son muchos los autores que han estudiado el primer grupo, mientras que el segundo ha sido tradicionalmente olvidado por gran parte de los investigadores, y requiere de mayor conocimiento (Freel, 2006; Davis y McMaster, 2015). Por ello, en esta tesis se van a estudiar los servicios sanitarios, que son un claro ejemplo de KIBS profesionales: según Chung y Tseng (2019) son las actividades más intensivas en conocimiento de este grupo de servicios, muy por encima de otras como la educación, tecnológicas y científicas o actividades financieras.

ELEMENTOS DIFERENCIADORES DE LOS SERVICIOS SANITARIOS PRIVADOS.

Los servicios sanitarios lo forman todas aquellas organizaciones que tratan de mejorar la salud dentro de un marco político e institucional. Dependiendo de cada país e incluso de territorios de un mismo país, dichos servicios pueden ser de carácter público o privado. Por ejemplo, en países como España dentro de los servicios de salud privados (SSP) podemos encontrar a los podólogos, dentistas, fisioterapeutas, ópticos y dietistas, entre otros. Algunas de las características más reseñables de los mismos radican en el pequeño tamaño en número de empleados de dichos establecimientos (Guay et al., 2012), así como en la enorme carga vocacional y el elevado porcentaje de trabajadores cualificados en las empresas que prestan este tipo de servicios (Chung y Tseng, 2019).

Para poder emprender en los SSP, se deben cumplir una serie de exigencias que los diferencian de otros tipos de servicios del sector terciario, los cuales están basados principalmente en dos elementos: Por un lado, los estrictos requisitos legales y, por otro lado, la necesaria inversión tanto formativa como de activos específicos:

A. Estrictos requisitos legales

Estas profesiones se diferencian de otro tipo de servicios por la exigencia del cumplimiento de dos importantes requisitos legales que se recogen explícitamente en el Artículo 3 de la Ley 2/1974, de 13 de febrero, sobre Colegios Profesionales⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Cita textual:

Artículo tercero.

Uno. Quien ostente la titulación requerida y reúna las condiciones señaladas estatutariamente tendrá derecho a ser admitido en el Colegio Profesional que corresponda.

Dos. Será requisito indispensable para el ejercicio de las profesiones colegiadas la incorporación al Colegio en cuyo ámbito territorial se pretenda ejercer la profesión.

- El primero consiste en la posesión de una titulación académica universitaria relacionada con la profesión ejercida. En este sentido, no es posible que trabajadores sin el pertinente título académico puedan ejercer legalmente las funciones de este tipo de profesiones.
- El segundo es la necesaria afiliación de los profesionales a sus respectivos colegios profesionales. Para desempeñar las funciones, se necesita de la inscripción en estas organizaciones.

En caso de no cumplir con ambos requisitos, se estaría en situación de ilegalidad al considerarse dicho escenario como intrusismo laboral, estando penado por las leyes españolas para este tipo de actividades.

B. Elevada inversión formativa y de activos específicos

Como consecuencia del cumplimiento de la normativa mencionada, estas actividades requieren una elevada inversión tanto formativa como de activos específicos para el correcto ejercicio de la profesión. Por ejemplo, diferentes planes de negocio planteados en este tipo de actividades señalan que los activos específicos van desde los 16.200 € de una clínica de fisioterapia (Mesones-Revuelta, 2016) hasta los 85.000€ de una clínica odontológica (Andreu, 2014).

Efectivamente, en los SSP buena parte de su competitividad reside en la posesión de activos inmateriales difícilmente transferibles como la reputación y conocimiento, siendo dichos activos especialmente costosos en las actividades sanitarias (Arcas et al., 2016).

En definitiva, se puede afirmar que el cumplimiento de requisitos legales (titulación y filiación) así como de inversión en formación y activos suponen una importante barrera de entrada a dicho sector. Frente a otros servicios, esa barrera les ha proporcionado durante bastante tiempo a los SSP un entorno competitivo atractivo y rentable. No obstante, diferentes cambios socioeconómicos están

provocando que la situación actual de los mismos sea más compleja y turbulenta, y cuestione la evolución futura de muchos de ellos.

SITUACIÓN ACTUAL DE LOS SERVICIOS SANITARIOS PRIVADOS (SSP).

Podríamos afirmar que los SSP están en un periodo de fuerte transformación debido a la implementación de importantes cambios principalmente de tipo legal y social que son visibles tanto desde el lado de la oferta y como de la demanda de los mismos.

Por el lado de la oferta existe un crecimiento de profesionales cualificados y colegiados dispuestos a trabajar en los mismos, así como un mejor acceso a las tecnologías y los activos específicos para su ejercicio. Por ejemplo, el Observatorio *Consumer* de las universidades⁴⁶ muestra que para las titulaciones relacionadas con SSP, el porcentaje de universidades privadas que ofertan estas titulaciones es mucho mayor que otras. Dicho observatorio revela que el 23% de la oferta formativa del Grado en Óptica y Optometría proviene de universidades privadas. En el Grado de Fisioterapia esta tasa llega hasta el 34% y hasta el 36% en el caso del Grado en Odontología y Estomatología. Estas cifras son muy superiores a otros estudios no sanitarios como por ejemplo el Grado de Filología Inglesa (5'5%); o Biología⁴⁷ (10%). Además, el número de colegiados en estas profesiones ha aumentado sensiblemente en los últimos años⁴⁸. Estos datos son vistos por los profesionales como signos de un crecimiento descontrolado del número de titulados, considerándose una amenaza para este tipo de actividades (Llodrá-Calvo, 2010).

Por el lado de la demanda se observan unos cambios en los hábitos de consumo de la sociedad que solicitan con mayor intensidad este tipo de servicios (Trathen y Gallaguer, 2009). Por ejemplo, en la odontología, el informe *Euromonitor* en España (2015) registra un incremento del 3% anual del gasto destinado a salud

⁴⁶ Fuente: Observatorio de Empleabilidad y Empleo Universitarios (www.consumer.es).

⁴⁷ Una excepción la encontramos en el Grado en Administración y Dirección de Empresas, que sí alcanza porcentajes similares, llegando al 33%.

⁴⁸ Según el Instituto Nacional de estadística (www.ine.es) la población de odontólogos en activo ha crecido un 115% en el periodo 2000 – 2018; los veterinarios un 52% para el mismo periodo; un 105% para los fisioterapeutas entre 2006 y 2018, un 16% para los ópticos (periodo 2011 – 2018)

bucodental; en óptica, el Libro Blanco de la Visión (2013) alerta sobre el efecto de las pantallas sobre la visión, advirtiendo que provocará una necesidad creciente de gafas y lentes en la población. Con un argumento similar, el Colegio Profesional de Fisioterapeutas de Castilla-La Mancha informa de los riesgos derivados de posturas incorrectas tanto por el uso de dispositivos móviles (especialmente en adolescentes) como del uso de equipos informáticos para el trabajo⁴⁹.

En definitiva, el incremento en el número de profesionales de estos sectores y en la demanda en los servicios que éstos proveen, suponen una fuente de retos y oportunidades que han sido percibida por multitud de emprendedores y pequeñas empresas. Esos cambios han propiciado una atomización y dispersión geográfica de establecimientos de reducido tamaño que persiguen diferentes estrategias y objetivos. Por un lado, destacan aquellos que han innovado en el servicio ofrecido focalizándose en nuevos nichos de mercado; por otro, los que han revolucionado el modo en que se presta este tipo de servicios utilizando el formato del asociacionismo; y, por último, los que han seguido siendo fieles a un servicio y una clientela. En otras palabras, ha existido una transformación en los modelos de negocio hasta ese momento vigentes en los SSP.

Según Chesbrough (2010), más allá de la ambigüedad que implica el concepto de modelo de negocio, podemos entender al mismo como una representación y conjunto de decisiones tales como las siguientes:

- Articular cómo se va a crear valor.
- Identificar el segmento de mercado y especificar los mecanismos de ventas elegidos.
- Definir la estructura de la cadena de valor requerida para crear y distribuir los activos usados.
- Estimar la estructura de costes y el beneficio potencial.
- Describir la posición en la que la empresa se conecta con clientes y proveedores.
- Formular la estrategia competitiva en la que la empresa consigue una posición ventajosa.

⁴⁹ Fuente: Ilustre Colegio Profesional de Fisioterapeutas de Castilla La Mancha (www.coficam.org), visitado el 31 de Enero de 2019.

En síntesis, y como venimos argumentando, para un emprendedor vinculado a los SSP la elección del modelo de negocio implica tomar decisiones sobre el modo en que su establecimiento va a desarrollar su estrategia. Ello va a afectar, por un lado, al tipo de clientes al que va dirigido, su ámbito de actuación, las alianzas con proveedores y asociaciones, accionistas, habilidades clave, tipo de producto desarrollado, estructura organizativa o acciones de marketing y publicidad; y por otro, al resultado de su actividad (crecimiento, rentabilidad, supervivencia) (Magretta, 2002).

EL MODELO DE NEGOCIO TRADICIONAL-INDEPENDIENTE.

Tradicionalmente, actividades como la desempeñada por dentistas, ópticos o fisioterapeutas han sido desarrolladas en pequeños establecimientos y casi en exclusiva por un profesional que debía asumir los roles relacionados con el ejercicio de la profesión, junto a otro tipo de roles que atañen a la figura del emprendedor. Más concretamente:

- **Asumen todo el riesgo de la iniciativa empresarial:** más allá de la asunción derivada de los riesgos financieros a los que se expone todo emprendedor, los independientes arriesgan también con marca personal, reputación e imagen.
- **Aportan alguna innovación:** entendiéndose como la introducción de nuevos diseños en la prestación del servicio, introducción de herramientas de investigación de mercado o publicidad y promoción de nuevos servicios (Lumpkin y Dess, 1996). En el caso del MN independiente, la innovación puede deberse a una demanda percibida no satisfecha o una mejora del servicio ya existente en el entorno más próximo.
- **Poseen total autonomía para desarrollar la actividad:** Previamente a la creación de la empresa, han adquirido todas las habilidades necesarias para llevar a cabo las tareas relacionadas con su actividad profesional.

Los principales problemas de ese formato es que al asumir todo ese abanico de funciones pueden surgir incompatibilidades entre ellas, especialmente cuando la sociedad demanda nuevos servicios y aplicaciones (Miles et al., 1995; Gerber, 1997). Por ejemplo, la tabla siguiente desarrolla los principales roles y funciones

de un profesional de SSP con formación, especialización y experiencia previa que posee una clínica propia:

Tabla A 7.21: Principales roles asumidos por emprendedores independientes en SSP.

Rol	Principales funciones	Problemas con otros roles
TÉCNICO	<p>El profesional desarrolla todas las tareas técnicas relacionadas con su profesión.</p> <p><u>Ejemplos:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Odontólogos: limpiezas bucales, implantes dentales, endodoncias, etc. - Fisioterapeutas: electroterapia, kinesioterapia, masajes, punciones, etc. - Ópticos: medición de vista, baja visión, calibración, etc. 	<p>Todos estos procedimientos requieren de un tiempo para su ejecución y son la principal fuente de ingresos de la clínica. Para poder desarrollarlas del mejor modo posible, el técnico desea disponer de los mejores materiales y activos específicos.</p>
DIRECTIVO	<p>El profesional debe cumplir con obligaciones concernientes al funcionamiento de la clínica tales como:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permisos de actividad, - Nóminas, - Publicidad, - Contabilidad, - Aprovisionamiento, - Selección de personal - Etc. 	<p>Estas tareas entran en conflicto con los roles técnicos de disponer de ciertos materiales y equipamientos de primerísima calidad, o contratación de personal cualificado, ya que podrían desestabilizar las cuentas de la clínica. Además, estas tareas suelen implicar un elevado componente de frustración para los profesionales del sector, al requerir una cierta cantidad de tiempo que no añade valor a la empresa.</p>
CREATIVO	<p>El profesional desea actualizar sus conocimientos y estar a la vanguardia en algunos procedimientos clave para el ejercicio de su profesión. Para ello:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actualización de conocimientos (cursos, congresos, formación adicional, etc.) - Desarrolla nuevas soluciones a problemas emergentes. 	<p>La formación y desarrollo de habilidades requieren de gran cantidad de tiempo (entrando en conflicto con la parte técnica) así como recursos económicos ocasionados por gastos de matrícula y desplazamientos (los cuales están en conflicto con la parte directiva, que observa un incremento de gastos y una reducción de ingresos).</p>

Fuente: Elaboración propia a partir de Gerber, 1997.

Para evitar dichas situaciones de conflicto, algunos investigadores apuntan que las tareas se deben delegar si requieren de un conocimiento en profundidad y detallado y son imposibles de transferir a niveles organizativos superiores. De este modo, aunque pueden surgir problemas de coordinación entre los miembros de la empresa, se suprimen otros costes muy superiores derivados de ineficiencias (Peris-Ortiz et al., 2012). Dicho de otro modo, muchos emprendedores están dispuestos a perder parte del control de la empresa y del proceso productivo en favor de una mejora de los resultados económicos (Dorobantu et al., 2017).

LOS MODELOS DE NEGOCIO ASOCIADOS EN REDES DE CLÍNICAS

Frente al modelo de la pequeña clínica de carácter independiente liderada por un emprendedor cualificado y multitareas, surgen nuevos modelos de negocio que apuestan por una división más clara de los roles, el asociacionismo y la especialización de tareas. Bajo este tipo de empresas, el emprendedor delega en otros miembros o redes de clínicas con las que suscribe algún tipo de alianza o contrato. Por tanto:

- **Hay división en el riesgo:** Si bien el emprendedor es quien asume gran parte del riesgo al aportar la iniciativa emprendedora, recursos económicos y conocimiento local, la red a la que se une acepta parte del riesgo, al prestar una imagen de marca, un periodo de formación y disponer de sinergias con otros miembros y profesionales. Además, dado que el emprendedor muchas veces no posee los requisitos legales para iniciar la actividad, suele firmar contratos laborales con personal cualificado.
- **Las innovaciones corren principalmente a cargo de la asociación:** Si bien el emprendedor innova al establecer su clínica en la que cree que hay una demanda no satisfecha, la red a la que se une aporta innovaciones más concretas en forma de nuevas formas de publicitarse, mejor acceso a economías de escala, sinergias por conocimiento compartido con otros miembros, tecnologías exclusivas, etc.
- **No suele haber autonomía total para poder realizar la actividad:** El emprendedor raramente posee los conocimientos técnicos y capacidades para llevar a cabo el trabajo de un modo autónomo. Por ello, delega algunas tareas tanto en profesionales contratados cualificados como en la red.

Por tanto, los recientes egresados en estas titulaciones y emprendedores que han visto una oportunidad de negocio en los SSP han visto en las alianzas con redes de clínicas y con profesionales de estas actividades una forma de superar algunas barreras de entrada y acceder más eficazmente al sector.

Implicaciones de los modelos de negocio asociados en los servicios sanitarios privados.

La irrupción de nuevos modelos de negocio en las pequeñas empresas de los SSP ha supuesto una importante innovación organizativa en lo relativo a la división de roles y tareas, pero también en la estrategia competitiva, en el incremento de los requisitos formativos de sus profesionales (especialización) e incluso en rol ejercido por los colegios profesionales. Más concretamente, pensamos que los principales cambios detectados son susceptibles de ser agrupados en tres tipos: los que hacen referencia al entorno de la actividad, los referidos al nivel de conocimientos exigidos y los que se enmarcan en el nuevo marco de relaciones laborales surgido.

CAMBIOS EN EL ENTORNO ESPECÍFICO.

Tradicionalmente, las empresas que operaban en los SSP estaban altamente influenciadas por los agentes institucionales que ejercían su poder bajo el desarrollo legal establecido, las restricciones y ciertos condicionantes de orden social (Arruñada, 1999). En los SSP, estas funciones están englobadas en los colegios profesionales, que limitan gran parte las alternativas estratégicas de los emprendedores y que velan por el cumplimiento de los mecanismos de aseguramiento de calidad establecidos por los mismos.

Con la entrada de las redes de clínicas asociadas, se han abierto otros mecanismos de competir vetados hasta el momento actual. Estas empresas son las que se encargan de buscar y aplicar aquellas innovaciones técnicas y organizativas que consideran más interesantes (asumiendo los roles creativos). Dichas actuaciones han afectado a los pequeños emprendedores independientes, que se han visto forzados a reorientar su estrategia con el fin de ser más eficientes, prestando mayor atención a aspectos relacionados con la propia dirección estratégica y el marketing.

Además, dichos cambios también han afectado al papel desarrollado por los colegios profesionales. La irrupción del modelo asociativo ha conseguido plantear

dudas en relación a la eficiencia y viabilidad del modelo propuesto por los colegios profesionales. Por ello, los colegios profesionales se están viendo obligados a reorientar las acciones llevadas a cabo que atañen a la organización y defensa de sus profesiones.

CAMBIOS EN LA ADQUISICIÓN Y GESTIÓN DEL CONOCIMIENTO.

Los profesionales de este tipo de actividades se han basado en el constante reciclaje de conocimientos clave de la profesión como principal fuente competitiva. Durante muchos años se ha considerado al mejor profesional a aquella persona que mejor conocía las diferentes técnicas y habilidades específicas para su actividad como principal fuente de creación de valor para la empresa. Por tanto, se podría afirmar que los roles técnicos eran los predominantes.

A partir de la llegada de diferentes modelos asociados, las tareas directivas y creativas han adquirido mayor protagonismo. Esta circunstancia ha propiciado la inclusión de otro tipo de conocimientos inéditos en estas actividades para añadir valor en este tipo de actividades. Ejemplo pueden ser aquellos conocimientos relacionados con la promoción de servicios, búsqueda de clientes, estrategias de fidelización o campañas de publicidad.

CAMBIOS EN LAS RELACIONES LABORALES.

Como hemos visto, las empresas que operan en estas actividades están lideradas por profesionales con formación relacionada con la actividad. Por tanto, se solapan los roles de técnico, directivo y creativo. Con la aparición de las redes de clínicas asociadas se ha observado un incremento de la contratación por cuenta ajena, así como un mayor volumen de acuerdos mercantiles entre las redes de clínicas y profesionales autónomos.

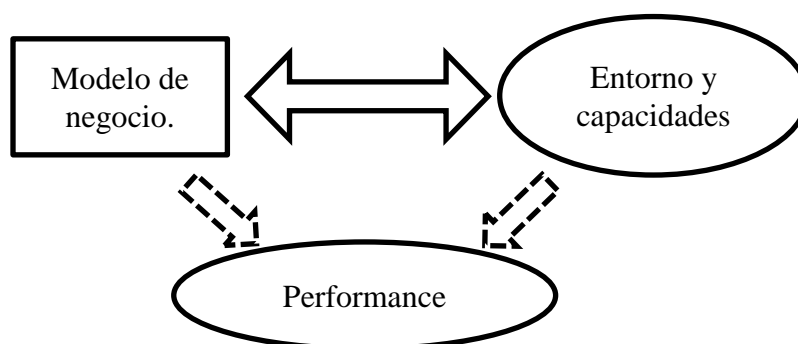
Cabe añadir que este cambio realizado en ambos tipos de contratación de estos profesionales supone también un cambio en los intereses perseguidos en la prestación de su trabajo. Dicho de otro modo, se ha pasado de un modelo en el

que los aspectos retributivos no son prioritarios (emprendedor independiente) a otro donde el personal cualificado es contratado por cuenta ajena, cuya principal motivación es de carácter económico (Carraher, 2011).

En definitiva, a la pregunta de ¿cuáles son los antecedentes y justificación de esta tesis doctoral?, nos atrevemos a decir lo siguiente. Los emprendedores, las pequeñas empresas y los establecimientos vinculados a los servicios de salud intensivos en conocimientos requieren de una investigación específica a los mismos. Sus elementos diferenciadores (tamaño, legislación y capacidades formativas) y situación que atraviesan avalan dicho enfoque. Además, esa investigación debe abordar cuestiones que permitan dar respuesta a los interrogantes que están surgiendo en el ámbito competitivo. Para tal fin, creemos que un punto de partida para realizar ese trabajo es distinguiendo modelos de negocio (independientes y asociados) vigentes en ese sector, otro evaluando la percepción del entorno y capacidades, y otro estableciendo como fin de la investigación el análisis de la performance percibida por esos emprendedores.

Dado que asumimos que el modelo de negocio influye en la performance, que la percepción del entorno institucional y capacidades poseídas están asociadas con el resultado de la actividad, y que ambos determinantes (modelo de negocio y entorno-capacidades) se influyen mutuamente, planteamos el siguiente esquema de investigación:

Figura 7.1: Esquema de la investigación.



Fuente: Elaboración propia.

Objetivos y preguntas de investigación.

Del anterior esquema podemos plantear como objetivo principal de esta tesis doctoral el siguiente:

Estudiar el efecto del modelo de negocio en la actividad de las pequeñas empresas de servicios intensivos en conocimiento, así como analizar el papel que desempeñan las instituciones y el capital intelectual en la performance de las mismas.

En línea con lo anterior, este objetivo se ha dividido en tres objetivos específicos:

B. Analizar la performance percibida por el ejercicio de la profesión.

Estas actividades tienen un fuerte componente vocacional, en la que el rendimiento económico puede quedar en un segundo término, primando otros aspectos tales como el reconocimiento social o el propio desarrollo de la actividad. A partir de la inclusión de los modelos asociados, la eficiencia económica ha cobrado mayor protagonismo, poniendo en cuestión la viabilidad de los MN tradicionales-independientes, más orientados a satisfacer el componente vocacional. Por tanto, este primer objetivo específico se plantea con la intención de confirmar si hay diferencias relevantes en la percepción de la performance de la empresa entre los diferentes modelos de negocio analizados.

C. Determinar el papel que juegan los principales referentes institucionales.

Este objetivo se plantea con la intención de confirmar si los modelos asociados son percibidos también como instituciones de referencia en los SSP, o si, por el contrario, son los colegios profesionales quien siguen gozando de este status como principal institución reguladora.

Para alcanzar dicho objetivo, el estudio se ha diseñado desde la Teoría Institucional, en las que se han barajado tanto los efectos isomórficos de las

instituciones (coercitivo, normativo y mimético) como la procedencia de los mismos (legitimación legal para los colegios profesionales; o legitimación de mercado para las compañías líderes de la actividad).

D. Investigar la asociación existente entre el capital intelectual y el desempeño de la actividad.

En los modelos tradicionales-independientes, toda la inversión en conocimientos estaba orientada a reforzar la dimensión técnica. Sin embargo, con la entrada de los modelos asociados, se han incorporado una gran variedad de conocimientos provenientes de habilidades directivas, organizativas y relacionales que han dinamizado estas actividades.

Por tanto, este objetivo se ha planteado con la intención de evaluar la relación existente entre la inversión realizada por los profesionales en las tres principales dimensiones del capital intelectual, el modelo de negocio implementado y el resultado obtenido. Con ello, se pretende observar el nivel de intangibles que poseen estas empresas en función de conocimientos específicos, formación relacionada, habilidades y experiencias (capital humano); de maquinaria específica y mecanismos de coordinación (capital estructural) y del apoyo de los clientes, reputación y relaciones con el entorno (capital relacional).

En definitiva, a la luz de los cambios experimentados por las empresas objeto de este proyecto de Tesis Doctoral, pensamos que más allá de la dicotomía independiente-asociado, el modelo de negocio captura la evolución en la gestión de esas empresas. Además, para su estudio también debemos tener en cuenta, por un lado, a las diferentes instituciones presentes en estas profesiones dada la especial regulación que ejercen. Y, por otro, a los diferentes recursos que en forma de capital intelectual poseen estas empresas (los conocimientos técnicos relacionados con la profesión y los conocimientos relacionados con la gestión y la mejora del proceso productivo). Todos estos aspectos suponen un buen punto de partida para predecir la performance futura de los SSP.

Estructura de la tesis.

En el primer capítulo se analizan las bases fundamentales que se van a trabajar en la investigación. El capítulo se inicia con una revisión de literatura sobre el fenómeno del emprendimiento, así como sus características principales. Seguidamente se analizan los tres principales modelos de negocio asociados que operan en este tipo de actividades (las cadenas franquiciadoras, las cooperativas y las centrales de compra). A continuación, dado el importante papel que juegan, se estudian los colegios profesionales y el papel que desempeñan. La última sección del capítulo está destinada a evaluar la relación triangular existente entre los emprendedores, las redes de clínicas asociadas y los colegios profesionales.

En el segundo capítulo se establecen los dos enfoques teóricos usados para estudiar los principales referentes institucionales, los recursos intangibles y la performance percibida. Dada las características de este tipo de actividades, se ha optado en primer lugar por la teoría institucional, la cual se centra en el análisis del entorno de las empresas, y es relevante para analizar la influencia tanto de los colegios profesionales como de las redes de clínicas asociadas. En segundo lugar, se ha decidido usar la teoría del capital intelectual para analizar los recursos intangibles que poseen este tipo de empresas. El uso de esta teoría se justifica dado que son actividades muy intensivas en conocimiento, el cual es una de los principales aspectos clave para la obtención de ventajas competitivas (Suciu and Năsulea, 2019).

El tercer capítulo describe los aspectos metodológicos llevados cabo en la presente investigación. La primera sección está destinada a conocer la situación de las tres profesiones analizadas (dentistas, odontólogos y fisioterapeutas), haciendo especial hincapié en la evolución desde su creación, normativa vigente y la situación de sus profesionales. Seguidamente se expone las dos metodologías que se han diseñado e implementado en este trabajo. Dado que estas actividades se trata de un fenómeno relativamente nuevo y que las empresas analizadas son de muy reducida dimensión (9 o menos empleados), se ha decidido adoptar una metodología mixta de corte exploratorio. Para ello se parte de un enfoque cualitativo que permitirá conocer en profundidad las percepciones de los

profesionales de dichos sectores en aspectos claves que se pretenden estudiar tales como la percepción de las actuaciones que los colegios profesionales llevan a cabo, el conocimiento que poseen estas empresas o el modo en que dicho conocimiento es adquirido y gestionado. Una vez comprendida la situación actual de los profesionales de estas actividades, se desarrolla un estudio cuantitativo, que está basado tanto ese estudio cualitativo previo como en un cuestionario respondido por una muestra de 78 empresas. En el mismo se pregunta a los encuestados aspectos relacionados con el capital intelectual, el papel de las instituciones del entorno, o la competitividad percibida.

El cuarto capítulo muestra los resultados obtenidos en las dos metodologías implementadas. La primera sección consta de los datos descriptivos más relevantes tales como el rol desempeñado o la experiencia. A continuación, se exponen las principales percepciones y opiniones detectadas en la investigación cualitativa a partir de los diferentes enfoques teóricos previamente mencionados. Posteriormente se muestran los resultados obtenidos a partir de la investigación cuantitativa. El análisis estadístico realizado tiene en cuenta los diferentes niveles de análisis propuestos, siendo el modelo de negocio, la actividad y el rol de los encuestados. Además, dado el carácter no paramétrico de los datos obtenidos, se decidió implementar un análisis cualitativo comparado (*Qualitative Comparative Analysis – QCA*) Por último, se discuten las conclusiones extraídas de ambos estudios, a partir del citado QCA, técnicas no paramétricas complementarias, el propio estudio cualitativo y revisión de literatura.

El último capítulo se dedica a mostrar los principales hallazgos, así como la interpretación de los resultados alcanzados tanto en el análisis cualitativo como cuantitativo. Seguidamente, se citan las limitaciones del estudio, así como futuras líneas de investigación.

Contribuciones.

Los resultados de este trabajo tendrán contribuciones a nivel académico, profesional y político:

A **nivel académico**, la presente tesis pretende contribuir a literatura relacionada con el emprendimiento de las pequeñas empresas y sus formas organizativas. Este punto es sumamente importante, dada la confusión existente en la literatura actual en relación con los modelos de negocio (Foss y Saebi, 2018) y el desempeño de estos (Nielsen et al, 2018). Para obtener una visión global del fenómeno, se pretende conocer las percepciones tanto de los propietarios de las empresas como de los trabajadores de ellas para tener una visión más global de su situación.

Además, hay que tener en cuenta que las especiales características de estas empresas posibilitan construir puentes entre los dos enfoques teóricos usados. Por un lado, la importancia del conocimiento en estas actividades permite realizar una contribución a las teorías de gestión del conocimiento y capital intelectual desde el marco institucional en que estas se desarrollan (¿Cómo afectan los agentes del entorno al conocimiento que poseen las empresas?). Por el otro lado, dada la especial regulación de estas actividades, así como el impacto de nuevas organizativas, esta tesis contribuye a estudiar los efectos de nuevos métodos de gestión del conocimiento sobre las diferentes instituciones del entorno (¿Cómo afectan los nuevos modelos de negocio y sus innovaciones a las actuaciones de los colegios profesionales y de sus miembros?).

A **nivel político**, el presente trabajo ayuda a los agentes institucionales (colegios profesionales, asociaciones profesionales, legisladores, asociaciones de clientes, proveedores, etc.) a tener una visión más completa de los problemas organizativos a los que se enfrentan este tipo de profesiones. Dada la importancia del papel que juegan en sus respectivas actividades, la corrección y mejora de sus actuaciones resulta ser una pieza clave para el futuro de sus profesiones.

En este sentido hay que tener en cuenta que, aunque en esta Tesis Doctoral se analicen solamente servicios sanitarios privados (SSP), hay otros servicios que

tienen características y barreras de entrada similares basadas en el conocimiento y en desarrollo legal. Ejemplos de estas actividades son los despachos de economistas, graduados sociales, gestores administrativos, agentes de aduanas, abogados, procuradores⁵⁰, entre otros.

Por último, este trabajo también contiene recomendaciones **para los profesionales del sector**. En este sentido, aunque se percibe claramente que estas actividades están en un momento de crecimiento, es importante implementar aquellas actuaciones que permitan sobrevivir cuando factores externos a las empresas se presenten menos favorables. Por ello, al final del mismo se presentan varios aspectos clave que los profesionales deberían tener en cuenta para mejorar la eficiencia de sus empresas relacionadas con su formación y reciclaje, en temas de gestión empresarial y estrategia. Dichos aspectos pueden ser clasificados en dos:

Por un lado, desde la estrategia empresarial, la elección de un modelo de negocio implica la aceptación de una serie de planteamientos tácticos, pero también el rechazo de otras tácticas que no van acordes con el modelo implementado (Casadesus-Masanell y Ricart, 2010). Por ello, esta tesis va a presentar algunas de las principales decisiones tácticas implementadas por cada modelo, así como su relevancia en la creación de valor.

Por otro, dado el rol de las diferentes asociaciones existentes en el entorno de estas profesiones, la presente investigación pretende realzar el papel de las economías colaborativas entre los emprendedores de estas profesiones o de otras innovaciones organizativas que se estén aplicando. Dicho de otro modo, es de suponer que el asociacionismo pone en evidencia una cierta obsolescencia del modelo tradicional-independiente. Por ello, la optimización de las habilidades claves de los profesionales, la creación de sinergias y el desarrollo de eficaces mecanismos de coordinación puede suponer una mejora en la performance de su actividad.

⁵⁰ Un listado de las Profesiones de obligada colegiación puede consultarse en: <http://eugo.es/portalEugo/verProfesionesReguladas.htm>

Appendix VIII: Conclusions, limitations and future research (Spanish).

A lo largo de esta Tesis Doctoral se ha estudiado la organización de las empresas españolas que prestan servicios sanitarios privados (SSP) intensivos en conocimientos (dentistas, odontólogos y fisioterapeutas), así como sus percepciones respecto a la performance obtenida y sus principales determinantes.

Se decidió estudiar los SSP debido a los cambios acaecidos en las mismas durante los últimos tiempos, pero también porque suponían una oportunidad investigadora dada la singularidad de esta industria (reducido tamaño de sus empresas) y ausencia de trabajos empíricos realizados desde el área de la Dirección de Empresas. Inicialmente se observó que el modo tradicional de trabajar, de carácter vocacional, estaba siendo modificado por la llegada de emprendedores con un perfil más gerencial, que detectaron multitud de oportunidades de negocio en este tipo de actividades. Como consecuencia de ello, notamos que se implementaron algunas medidas hasta entonces inéditas para disponer de empresas más eficientes, tales como mejores campañas de márketing, búsqueda de sinergias, o mayor rentabilidad de los recursos disponibles.

Todos estos factores han cuestionado la eficacia de los organismos reguladores de estas profesiones y la emergencia de nuevos modelos de negocio. Todo ello nos condujo a analizar el papel desarrollado por los Colegios Profesionales, así como el impacto que han tenido las cadenas de clínicas asociadas, las tendencias de consumo, y la presencia de otros competidores, muchos de los cuales convertidos en referentes para el resto de la comunidad profesional.

Desde otro enfoque más de gestión, observamos que esos nuevos emprendedores también habían introducido cambios importantes en términos de adquisición y desarrollo de habilidades. A los ya existentes conocimientos técnicos asociados a las profesiones estudiadas, se han aplicado otros conocimientos hasta entonces poco explotados (provenientes del management y marketing, principalmente). Como consecuencia de ello augurábamos una mejor eficacia en el uso de los

recursos disponibles, sinergias entre las habilidades de los profesionales, y más acciones de fidelización de pacientes.

Por todo ello, y dadas las características del sector y su evolución más reciente, el propósito último del trabajo quedó definido como sigue:

Estudiar el efecto del modelo de negocio en la actividad de las pequeñas empresas de servicios intensivos en conocimiento, así como analizar el rol que desempeñan las instituciones y el capital intelectual en la performance de las mismas.

Para tal fin se han analizado las opiniones de informantes clave (propietarios y trabajadores) que desempeñan su profesión en establecimientos y clínicas odontológicas, ópticas y de fisioterapia de 9 o menos empleados. Pensamos que un estudio así diseñado puede suponer muchos avances a nivel académico. En primer lugar, estas actividades están clasificadas en la literatura como actividades intensivas en conocimiento de carácter profesional (P-KIBS), las cuales han sido olvidadas por gran parte de los investigadores que trabajan en esa línea de literatura (Freel, 2006; Davis y McMaster, 2015). En segundo lugar, se han estudiado empresas de muy pequeño tamaño, las cuales tienen importantes limitaciones para su análisis, debido a la confusión entre propiedad y gestión, acceso a las mismas y a la falta de bases de datos fiables (Gurău and Ranchhod, 2020).

Para superar estas limitaciones, y con el propósito último de obtener una visión completa del fenómeno estudiado, se decidió implementar una metodología mixta, combinando diseños cualitativos y cuantitativos. En definitiva, la elección de una muestra perteneciente a un solo país, de un tipo concreto de servicios (profesionales intensivos en conocimiento), de empresas de tan reducida dimensión, así como de una metodología mixta encuentra sus motivos en los objetivos del trabajo, en las limitaciones de la muestra y en la importancia del contexto analizado.

Con carácter general este estudio muestra que esas actividades se encuentran en un periodo de intensos cambios en los ámbitos organizativos y estratégicos, en el que coexisten varios modelos de negocio tales como cadenas franquiciadoras, cooperativas o centrales de compras, además de las clínicas de corte más tradicional e independiente. Esta situación ha propiciado la dinamización de los SSP, al introducir decisiones organizativas que optimizan el proceso productivo en estas pequeñas empresas.

El análisis efectuado para tratar esa dinamización se ha realizado desde los marcos teóricos proporcionados tanto por la teoría institucional, como de capital intelectual.

- La justificación de la teoría institucional se debe al entorno conservador y regulador en el que se desarrollan este tipo de actividades: las elevadas barreras de entrada tanto en términos de formación como de equipos de trabajo, así con los requisitos de calidad determinados por los colegios profesionales son argumentos atractivos para el uso de esta teoría. Además, con la incorporación de cadenas franquiciadoras, cooperativas, centrales de compras o aseguradoras (y sus acciones de promoción), se añaden influencias organizativas provenientes del mercado que también afectan al comportamiento de las empresas ya existentes.
- Por otro lado, los elevados requisitos formativos y la alta especialización de los equipos de trabajo usados respaldan el uso de las teorías del conocimiento, siendo la teoría de capital intelectual el marco utilizado en esta investigación. Si bien esta teoría presenta algunas limitaciones para poder implementarla⁵¹, consideramos que sus dimensiones suponen un excelente lienzo sobre el que estudiar las percepciones que tienen los emprendedores estudiados. En concreto:
 - El capital humano es un recurso inherente a este tipo de actividades. La elevada formación necesaria solamente para iniciar

⁵¹ Por ejemplo, muchos autores señalan la dificultad que tiene esta teoría para ser replicada en diferentes empresas (Dumay, 2013) o usando fuentes secundarias (Maditinos, 2011).

la actividad y el valor de las experiencias y acciones de reciclaje constante que necesitan justifican el uso de esta teoría.

- El capital estructural de estas empresas es elevado. Más allá de la gestión de los datos de los pacientes, o de la coordinación entre los trabajadores de las clínicas, estas actividades requieren de la manipulación de maquinaria altamente sofisticada, que necesitan de mucha habilidad para ser usada e interpretada.
- El capital relacional de estas empresas está basado en las relaciones entre los profesionales y sus respectivos colegios profesionales. Sin embargo, con la aparición de los MNA, se establecen redes formales de trabajo, a través de diferentes tipos de alianzas, que introdujeron multitud de mejoras organizacionales y relacionales. Por ello, esta dimensión también es importante.

En resumen, la combinación de diseños metodológicos cualitativos y cuantitativos, junto al uso de los dos enfoques teóricos complementarios nos ha permitido analizar en profundidad si existe alguna conexión entre las presiones del entorno y las capacidades de las empresas con la configuración de un modelo de negocio u otro, así como en la percepción una mejor performance.

Principales conclusiones del trabajo.

De la investigación cualitativa.

Esta propuesta metodológica ha permitido estudiar en profundidad el entorno más cercano al emprendedor al analizar los efectos institucionales de los CP y otras instituciones públicas, así como de los principales referentes del mercado de estas actividades. Para ello se revisaron las opiniones provenientes de 12 casos formados por gerentes de distintas empresas de servicios (de diferentes niveles de intensidad de conocimientos). Con ello, se pudo contestar a la segunda pregunta de investigación. (*Para emprendedores que prestan KIBS, ¿Cómo afecta el MN a la percepción de las influencias institucionales?*). Los hallazgos son varios:

- Las presiones coercitivas se ejecutan principalmente de modo positivo, a través de requerimientos para ejercer la profesión o burocracia requerida (permisos o licencias públicas). Las acciones de carácter negativo (multas o castigos) son evitados al máximo posible, aunque se dan en algunas ocasiones.
- Las presiones normativas vienen propuestas principalmente por los organismos públicos, en términos de recompensas y promociones. Cuando los profesionales siguen las indicaciones de estas instituciones, se les ofrecen facilitadores sociales (ayudas económicas), reputación y formación aceptada.
- Las presiones miméticas provienen principalmente de los casos más innovadores. Se percibe que las actividades analizadas están en un periodo de crecimiento que ofrece muchas oportunidades a los emprendedores más preparados, no sólo en términos de formación técnica, sino aquellos capaces de detectar dichas oportunidades. Por ello, la formación comercial y directiva está volviéndose más importante en estas empresas.

Además, el estudio del capital intelectual a través de entrevistas en profundidad permitió analizar la organización de los recursos intangibles de estas empresas, como uno de sus activos más importantes. Estos hallazgos responden a la tercera

pregunta de investigación (*Para emprendedores que prestan KIBS, ¿Cómo afecta el MN a la gestión del CI?*):

- El capital humano: La formación y el aprendizaje continuo así como la experiencia son piezas clave en estas actividades. La formación inicial, aunque extensa, no es suficiente para desempeñar estas profesiones a niveles recomendados por la comunidad. Por ello, se aboga por la formación continua y la necesidad de centrarse en alguna especialidad.
- El capital estructural: En términos de mecanismos de coordinación, los sistemas productivos son bastante básicos, ya que se trata de pequeñas empresas donde los canales de comunicación son directos entre trabajadores y emprendedores. Sin embargo, al analizar las herramientas, equipos informáticos y maquinaria, se observa que la inversión ha sido muy elevada, debido a la elevada sofisticación de estos aparatos.
- El capital relacional: En esta dimensión, las contribuciones fueron de diversa índole: a) algunos de los casos son bastante escépticos con la ayuda prestada por los CP a los que están afiliados, lo cual supone una limitación; b) los MN asociados eran intensivos en establecer sinergias entre las habilidades de los profesionales de las clínicas asociadas y en compartir la maquinaria más costosa en busca de una mayor eficiencia de estas, c) también realizan un mayor esfuerzo en obtener información de sus pacientes para mejorar el proceso productivo; y d) se percibió mucha incomodidad con otros agentes como son las universidades privadas y compañías aseguradoras.

Tras haber respondido a la segunda y tercera pregunta de investigación, se puede responder a la principal pregunta planteada (*En pequeñas empresas que prestan servicios sanitarios privados, ¿Existe un mejor modelo de negocio?*):

Se puede afirmar que cada MN tiene sus debilidades y fortalezas, pero no se observa un MN que sea superior al otro. Las mejoras debido a las innovaciones aportadas por los MNA se ven reducida por los costes asociados y por el tamaño

de las clínicas (principalmente pequeñas empresas). Por ello, todavía existen MNI suficientemente exitosos.

De la investigación cuantitativa.

A través de esta metodología se analizaron los datos recogidos vía cuestionario a una muestra de 78 empresas españolas que prestan sus servicios de salud en establecimientos y clínicas odontológicas, ópticas y de fisioterapia, de 9 o menos empleados. Para tal fin hemos controlado diversos aspectos como la localización, subsector o la antigüedad de la empresa, y se establecieron dos *outcomes* o resultados: el modelo de negocio implementado (independiente o asociado) y la performance percibida. En línea con la literatura existente y con los objetivos planteados, se ha podido establecer condiciones causales o determinantes de dichos *outcomes* vinculados al entorno de las empresas y su capital intelectual.

Para validar los análisis, se usó tanto la técnica QCA como otras técnicas no paramétricas (tablas cruzadas y U de Mann-Whitney), y los resultados se justificaron con revisión de literatura, y especialmente con la información obtenida en el análisis cualitativo previo, así como de las preguntas abiertas incluidas en el cuestionario.

En primer lugar, y como conclusión general, se puede afirmar que el modelo de negocio, la actividad analizada y el rol no afectan directamente a la percepción de una mejor performance. Por tanto, la primera hipótesis quedó rechazada.

Seguidamente, se estudió que diferencia en los SSP un modelo de negocio u otro, (hipótesis 2 y 4) y la asociación de esos factores con una superior performance (hipótesis 3 y 5). Para tal fin, se consideró, por un lado, cómo evaluaban los emprendedores entrevistados las influencias provenientes del entorno (CP y compañías de referencia) y, por otro, cómo se organizaban los recursos intangibles (capital humano y relacional). Dicho análisis nos permitió entender qué configuraciones de factores estaban asociadas con un uno u otro modelo, así como con una mejor performance. La siguiente tabla (5.1) resume las principales conclusiones:

Tabla A 7.22: Resultado de hipótesis.

Hipótesis	Condiciones causales	Outcome	Resultado
1	MN, Actividad y Rol	Performance	No se acepta
2	Influencias institucionales (CP y Mercados)	MN	Se observaron combinaciones por las que se configuran los MNI.
4	Capital intelectual (CH y CR)		
3	Influencias institucionales (CP y Mercados)	Performance	Se establecieron combinaciones que se asociaron a una performance superior.
5	Capital intelectual (CH y CR)		

Fuente: Elaboración propia.

De acuerdo a la misma, podríamos afirmar que el MNI se caracteriza principalmente por una percibida ausencia de influencias de mercado y de capital relacional, junto con la presencia de un capital humano muy elevado. Esos aspectos están en línea con la principal literatura que relaciona el pequeño tamaño de esas empresas y el componente vocacional de esas profesiones con su organización interna.

En cuanto a la performance percibida, los valores más altos se asocian a una elevada atención de los managers por la tendencias de mercado, la posesión de capital humano y el desarrollo de capital relacional,. Además, es remarcable que si bien esas son las tres condiciones causales asociadas a una mejor performance, su efecto parece algo mayor en los MNA que en los MNI. En otras palabras, si bien los MNA no suponen de por si una mejor performance en los SSP, sí que han introducido algunas innovaciones estratégicas que se antojan claves para el futuro de los MNI tales como la mejora de las relaciones con clientes y proveedores, y una mayor atención a las tendencias de consumo.

Limitaciones.

Todas las investigaciones tienen sus puntos débiles, y ésta tesis no está exenta de ellas. Las principales limitaciones que deben tenerse en cuenta a la hora de interpretar los resultados de la misma se pueden agrupar en: a) la delimitación conceptual del fenómeno analizado, b) en las técnicas estadísticas empleadas, y c) en el tamaño de la muestra.

En primer lugar, puede haber discrepancias en la denominación de los modelos de negocios (MN). Si bien algunos autores los definen como sistemas o formas de negocio (López y Ventura, 2001), o como estructuras híbridas (Ménard, 2011), también es cierto que las cadenas asociadas estudiadas en esta tesis cumplen con todos los requisitos propuestos por Chesbrough (2010) sobre qué funciones debe cubrir todo MN. Además, también existen precedentes en la agrupación de los MN propuesta en el presente trabajo. Por ejemplo, Pérez-Serrabona González ya acuñó a todas estas fórmulas como formas asociativas, entre las que se encuentran *“almacenes colectivos de detallistas independientes, centrales de compras, cooperativas detallistas, cadenas voluntarias, afiliación contractual, concesión o venta piramidal”* (2014:66-67). Cabe añadirse que a la dicotomía MN independientes - asociados es una clasificación reconocida en la investigación de Pymes (Camisón et al., 2010), y permite capturar la evolución en los sistemas de gestión de esas empresas y medir su efecto.

En segundo lugar, la elección del QCA como técnica estadística principal conlleva una serie de restricciones que deben ser consideradas cuando se generalicen los resultados de este trabajo. Se decidió implementar esta técnica debido al no cumplimiento de los requisitos de parametricidad de los datos. Si bien este hecho representa cierto empobrecimiento de los resultados, también es cierto que es capaz de detectar los casos más relevantes así como los patrones más significativos (Legewie, 2013), siendo capaz de ofrecer resultados mucho más complejos que otras técnicas sustitutivas más tradicionales (Pajunen, 2008). Esta técnica permitió establecer combinaciones por las que se pueden obtener los outcomes propuestos. Este hecho es sin duda muy beneficioso para los profesionales investigados, que en lugar de mostrar resultados que resalten alguna

de las variables clave, se han obtenido combinaciones que ofrecen soluciones más completas y de mayores garantías.

En tercer lugar, la muestra de empresas analizadas puede parecer insuficiente (apenas representa un porcentaje muy bajo de clínicas que prestan SSP en activo en España) aunque hay que destacar que el número de clínicas estudiadas se ajusta al ideal para implementar la técnica QCA, y que en España la mayoría de las empresas que prestan SSP en España son microempresas.

Futuras investigaciones.

En este punto se hace necesario destacar que, a pesar de que esta Tesis Doctoral ha intentado abordar de un modo completo la situación de los SSP, también notamos que han habido algunos aspectos que no se han podido estudiar por limitaciones de tipo económico y temporal.. Su reconocimiento su representa una oportunidad para futuras investigaciones.

Primero, hemos evidenciado que la transferencia de conocimiento se presenta como un marco teórico excepcional para estudiar este tipo de empresas. Por ello, dadas sus características, es importante entender cómo los MNA se coordinan entre ellos para mejorar la eficiencia de sus clínicas.

Segundo, teniendo en cuenta el elevado valor que añaden los profesionales de estas actividades al conjunto de las redes de clínicas, la teoría de derechos de propiedad podría vislumbrar algunos de los elementos diferenciadores en este tipo de este tipo de asociaciones. Además, analizar este fenómeno desde la teoría de la agencia permitiría comprender mejor y predecir algunos de los principales problemas a los que pueden enfrentarse estas clínicas respecto a los emprendimientos basados en modelos independientes.

En tercer lugar, la investigación realizada en el presente trabajo ha obtenido sus resultados basándonos en las percepciones de sus encuestados y mediante un estudio cualitativo previo. Por ello, es necesaria la obtención de unos resultados menos subjetivos, obteniéndolos a partir de bases de datos, con los que contrastar estos resultados. En definitiva, todos esos aspectos podrían abordarse con una investigación más ambiciosa que abordara un mayor número de empresas, la inclusión de otras variables de estudio y su complementación con otros indicadores de tipo financiero (Gurău and Ranchhod, 2020).

Relativo al ámbito temporal, debemos de tener en cuenta dos importantes aspectos. Por un lado, que el análisis fue cross-sectional, eso implica que hemos estudiado una muestra en un momento del tiempo dado. De tal forma que emerge la duda si esos resultados serían los mismos si el momento de recolección de los

datos hubiera sido otro. Y, por otro, y en la línea anterior, que en el momento de cierre de esta Tesis Doctoral seguimos inmersos en un escenario marcado por la pandemia del Covid-19. De ello emergen importantes cuestiones que pueden guiar fructíferas líneas de investigación. Por ejemplo, dado que la mayoría de las empresas que prestan SSP son microempresas, las cuales se caracterizan por una elevada fragilidad financiera (Bartik et al., 2020), ¿cuál va a ser su ratio de mortalidad comparada con otras de mayor tamaño. Desde el punto de vista del emprendimiento, también podemos preguntarnos ¿cómo va a influir la pandemia en los SSP? o como apunta Ratten (2020) estudiar qué oportunidades emergen de dicha situación.

En definitiva, todo parece indicar que, dada la naturaleza sanitaria y de salud de estos sectores, van a producirse cambios. Y que esos cambios tendrán que ver con los ámbitos normativos y competitivo. Para abordar el primero, las teorías basadas en el Modelo de Negocio pueden guiar la investigación para dar respuesta a los ajustes organizativos necesarios. Respecto al ámbito competitivo, las teorías del Capital Intelectual y de las Capacidades Dinámicas permitirían explicar el desigual efecto de ese nuevo escenario en la performance de las empresas.